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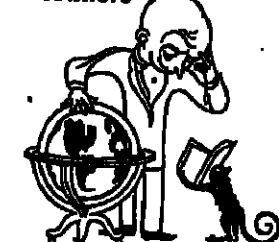
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ART

The observer obliterated

By Anita Brookner

MICHAEL FRIED:
Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot.
249pp. University of California Press.
£16.50.
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The theme of this dramatic book is so novel and at the same time so nebulous that one reads the text with mounting anxiety in case the argument, which purports to be cumulative, should escape one altogether. It is not only necessary but essential to state this argument at the outset, to let one's immediate reactions disperse, and to haul one's most dispassionate critical apparatus into position.

This process will not be accomplished without a sign of something more than effort, for Michael Fried involves one in a lot of hard work; at the same time he manages to convey the information that hard work is his particular province, and that "modern scholars" or "modern commentators", whom he arranges on numerous occasions throughout his text, simply repeat each other's clichés.

The argument can be stated as follows. In France, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a determined and conscious effort was made by the painter to seek a new relationship with the spectator or beholder of his picture. This was to be achieved by certain stratagems, the function of which was to re-establish the "ontological status" or autonomy of the picture itself.

For this reason it would be necessary to deny the spectator or beholder access to the picture, and this could be achieved by letting the characters depicted interact with one another across the picture space to the exclusion of any possible audience. In order to "obliterate" the spectator it might be necessary for the painter to depict personages with their backs to him or lost in self-absorption or facing each other and behaving or performing in apparent unconsciousness that they are being regarded.

The effect on the spectator, who had of course been there all along, would be to obliterate his curiosity—which would be curious in itself—and the spectator so ignored would thus be seized into looking harder at something that purported to be getting on very well without him. The characters depicted in activities such as drawing,

sleeping, reading, conversing etc. would be participating in an "absorptive" mode of being which would not only establish their own privacy (and signify the end of Rococo fragmentation) but would place the spectator in a subordinate relation to the painter and to the thing painted.

It is stated that this process was started by Chardin, who on two occasions depicted a draughtsman, with his back to the spectator, sketching Pigalle's "Mercury", and that it was perfected by Greuze who, by painting multi-figure dramas of great emotional complexity and heightened plotting, managed to "screen the audience out" or at least "refuse to allow the fact of its existence to impinge upon the absorbed consciousness of its figures". So, it is argued, instead of appealing to an audience, as most traditional criticism of this painter would seem to establish, the paintings of Greuze do in fact neutralize the very presence of an audience by allowing it no function in the perception of the pictures, and thereby inviting it to react, presumably in a mood of fascinated frustration, to the "absorptive" modes thus shown, and shown to be so strong that they exclude or "obliterate" the spectator or beholder.

It is then argued that David, observing that Greuze had perfected this method, had to have recourse to more extreme stratagems, and proposed one in "Belshazzar receiving alms" by introducing into the picture a surrogate spectator (the soldier with his arms raised in disbelief), by swivelling round the viewpoint so that Belshazzar faces across the canvas instead of out of it, and by opening up the back of the picture space by a series of perspectival devices so as actively to repel the spectator or even as it were send him off to ricochet against the opposite wall.

The spectator, thus teased, negated, "obliterated", and physically sent packing, is not however altogether denied access to the picture space. He can, for example, look at landscapes, into which artists will positively invite his participation by placing clumps of figures, engaged in different activities, at different levels of depth in the imagined space. The spectator can thus enter this space: indeed this is sanctioned by Diderot who, in the Salon of 1767, describes the landscapes of Joseph Vernet as a sequence of imaginary promiscuous taken in the company of an imaginary abbe. By his permitted and imaginary wanderings in this constricted and imaginary landscape the spectator is not only allowed an extreme measure of

"existential reverie" but is "removed" from in front of the picture.

Since this method is sanctioned by Diderot (but I think only for Diderot himself) it is necessary to review certain pronouncements by this writer which devolve upon the "supreme fiction", ie, that the beholder does not exist. This supreme fiction will best be served by representations of "absorptive" activities, ranging from sleeping and reading to more complicated depictions of action and passion, served up in a dramatic "tableau" (Professor Fried prefers this word to picture) of the type perfected by Greuze. "Physical entry" and thus another form of removal from the traditional viewpoint will correspond with the pastoral mode of painting. Thus in two different ways the spectator will be displaced from his time-honoured position with regard to both the dramatic and the pastoral presentations of subject matter, the two modes of painting which, Fried says, predominated in mid-eighteenth-century France.

Several caveats can be entered at this stage, the most obvious being an objection to the idea of the "supreme fiction", namely that the spectator is not there. A fiction even more supreme, surely, is that the painter does not require the comprehension of the spectator—a fiction indeed, particularly in pictures such as Greuze's "Fils punit", one of Fried's examples, in which the spectator's empathy is essential to complete the import of the passions or actions depicted. Secondly, it can be argued that Diderot's recommendations that the spectator be "obliterated" are spasmodic and can be directly matched and contradicted by other passages in his writings which establish the centrality of the spectator to the whole enterprise, and of which the most celebrated example is contained in the *Essai sur la Peinture* of 1766: "Touche-moi, étonne-moi, déchire-moi; fais-moi tressaillir, pleurer, trembler, m'indigner d'abord; tu recouvreras ma raison, si tu peux".

Thirdly, it can be argued that Diderot's most explicit requirement, that of the surrogate spectator (which he discerned in an engraving after a supposed Van Dyck Belshazzar subject) is contained in a letter to Sophie Volland which no one else could have read and which was thus not common artistic currency at the time. Fourthly, it can be argued that the spectator should ask himself why he is exhibiting his paintings or, in the case of Greuze, charging them an entrance fee for the obliterating experience of looking

at them more carefully in the privacy of the artist's studio. Fifthly, it can be argued that the apparent exclusion of the spectator did not suddenly erupt in France in 1750 but was long established in European art. It is in fact the pre-condition of every *Sacra Conversazione*, where it is assumed that the spectator exists in the terrestrial world and the beings are depicted in Paradise, so that although the spectator is allowed a glimpse of the Madonna and Child and Saints he is precluded from their company by the fact that he is still living and still unregenerate.

It could further be objected that not many painters in eighteenth-century France would have immediately understood what Fried is talking about. How many of them, for example, would have been at home with the following statements?

At the same time, taking Diderot's writings as the definitive formulation of a conception of painting that up to a point was widely shared [my italics], it was only by negating the beholder's presence that this could be achieved: only by establishing the fiction of his absence or nonexistence could his actual placement before and central to the painting be secured. This paradox directs attention to the problematic character not only of the painting-beholder relationship but of something still more fundamental—the object-beholder (one is tempted to say object-subject) relationship which the painting-beholder relationship epitomizes. In Diderot's writings on painting and drama the object-beholder relationship as such, the very condition of spectatorship, stands indicted as theatrical, a medium of transcendence; and the success of both arts, in fact their continued functioning as major expressions of the human spirit, are held to depend upon whether or not painter and dramatist are able to undo that state of affairs, to *déthéâtriser* the beholding and so make it once again a mode of access to truth and conviction, albeit a truth and conviction that cannot be entirely equated with any known or experienced before.

I take this to mean that the spectator is not to plant himself in front of the canvas, expecting to enjoy the picture, but to be arrested by the apparent indifference of the characters, actions and passions depicted to whether he is there, enjoying himself, or not. What is far from clear and moreover can never be established is the character of the perception of this

archetypal eighteenth-century spectator, whether he reacted in a markedly novel manner to what purports to be a markedly novel stratagem, or, as I suspect, whether he took it all for granted, knowing, with every bit of common sense that he possessed, that in a two-dimensional representation of anything he was in all instances being manipulated into an appropriate state of visual and psychological receptivity.

It will not do to take Diderot as the average spectator; Diderot is too speculative, too volatile, too interfering, too agile a journalist to bear consistently any of the constructs which Fried lays on him. It would have provided a useful appendix to align all the multifarious internal contradictions in Diderot's writings on art, or to analyze his intellectual dependence on the fictive dialogue in which he arranges contrasted arguments and in which his opponent often proves the more successful. Diderot is more like Rameau's Nephew than Fried will allow him to be. "Surrogates in Diderot's criticism" would prove to be as fertile a subject as Fried's last chapter, in which he proposes the altogether more straightforward fiction of the surrogate spectator in various representations of the Belshazzar theme.

If, as it seems to me, Fried is talking about modes of perception, he is arguing from wrong premises. To propose examples of pictures which purport to alienate the spectator (or to "obliterate" him) while ignoring, in that same artist's work, pictures which solicit his attention—and numerous examples can be found in the oeuvre of Chardin, Greuze, and David—is not, as Fried would say, to clinch the argument. To browse, with almost Proustian sensibility, on states of attention which have little to do with the abrupt and rapid mood-changes of Diderot and then to attribute this sensibility to Diderot himself is more than misleading; it is incorrect. Here is a surprisingly harmonious but intellectually worrying sentence about the landscapes by Vernet exhibited in the Salon of 1767 and Diderot's reaction to them: "But because these solidifications are subsumed within a unified and immediately apprehensible decorative scheme, the cumulative effect of their dispersal and resistance to any resolving hegemony is one neither of dissociation nor of discord but of what may be thought of as deferral (of the satisfaction of unity)—a deferral and a satisfaction analogous to those of Diderot's fictive promenades through

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Vernet's paintings in the Salon of 1767".

Professor Fried envisages the eighteenth-century artist as living in a pure void, divorced from social, literary or political influences, and preoccupied only with his relationship with the beholder of his paintings. This may well be true, and too much may have been made of the opposite case, which imagines the painter as part of his times, acted upon by the thought of his times, and very frequently responding to the spirit of his times.

If the latter case is well served, it is because it contains most of the facts that can be established and because it is the historian's task to establish facts and, if possible, to interpret them. Fried has chosen a much more difficult task, and one which no-one living today may be able to perform, or to substantiate: he has decided to investigate motives which are never described, theories (such as the fragments of Diderot's theory quoted) which may or may not have been in the public domain and therefore consciousness, and high points of taste which were in fact subject to the fluctuations of the painter's own change of heart or the solicitations of experiment.

For the painting of eighteenth-century France is various and bewildering, concerned with native or semi-native traditions (Rococo), the impact of teachings from abroad (Neo-Classicism) and the desire of individual artists to make new

syntheses out of disparate modes. The most powerful single general movement is towards a tighter unity of the figure subject and a desire to endow it with the moral significance that it formerly possessed in the works of Poussin. To imply, as Fried does, that painters like Greuze and David, who were dominated by the idea of significance, should try to achieve this by "obliviating" the spectator (for whom the lesson was intended) is a brave but partial undertaking. Even the criticism of Diderot, so apparently simplistic, can be shown to have been written with the idea of participation, relief as dialogue, in mind.

It is therefore particularly speculative to build an entire case on a reaction which cannot be tested, namely the reaction of the contemporary spectator, and the motive, that of the contemporary painter, which remains undisclosed. Moreover, to make claims that this line of argument will bring one to the essential truth about mid-eighteenth-century painting in France is to manipulate the reader much as Fried proposes that the painter manipulates the beholder. It is a marvelous idea, but it remains an idea: it is not yet proven. But as Professor Fried intends to take it further (he instances the victims on Gérault's "Kali of the Medusa" who proffer to attract the attention of the brig Argus rather than solicit that of the spectator) it is to be hoped that we will be given the opportunity to test the idea once more on a future occasion.

The academic side

By Joseph Rykwert

DONALD DREW EGBERT,
The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture
Illustrated by the Grands Prix de Rome
Edited by David Van Zanten
217pp. with 36 black-and-white illustrations.
Princeton University Press: £12.60 (paperback, 27).
0 691 03943 7.

This is a sad book: the last work of a gifted and important teacher which could have been better. To start with the author, Donald Drew Egbert taught History of Art at Princeton from 1929 until 1970, when he retired; in the same year he published his best known book, *Social Radicalism in the Arts*. Although he died three years later, for a long time he had also been working on this present book. The earlier work was successful partly because it appeared positively modish in 1970, when the theme of *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture* would have seemed quite contrary. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which was to become the focus of discontent in 1968, had been identified as the enemy of whatever was best in architecture in the early years of the century, and had shown an obstinate unwillingness to renew itself. This of course led to the violent break in 1968, when it was subdivided first into six, then eight units, *pédagogiques*: how the shades of its enemies from Labrousse to Corbusier must have laughed!

Since Egbert's death a violent but foreseeable reaction set in, and by now the new book appears equally modish. Since there are too few painters and sculptors to produce drawings to satisfy collectors, the art market has turned also to architects (or its popular substitutes). Now the elaborate drawings required from the students of the Ecole used to culminate in schemes of monumental public buildings (occasionally for private buildings, prepared for a competition whose winner was not only assured of some years at the French Academy in Rome (hence the competition was simply referred to as the "Prix de Rome") but of a series of government commissions on his return. The competition therefore dominated the years of student training which would lead up to it, indeed dominated the French architectural profession. The Academy catered for painters and sculptors and engravers. The intention of its founders, Louis XIV and Colbert, was to institute a system of training and professional organization which would replace and exalt the old guild system - while placing it securely within the control, because under the patronage, of the crown. The system worked well enough under the ancien régime: most of the time the prize went to memorable architects, even if some of the best (the Gabriels, Ledoux) did not compete, and did

Egbert's book will remain useful as a directory: the list of the Prix-de-Rome winners and the illustrations alone would make it worth keeping. The text outlines the development of the architectural section of the Beaux-Arts. It contains lapses: Durand's conception of form was anything but free; in the 1820s and 1830s *connaissance* certainly did not mean convention in our sense; Duban may have been the first teacher in the Ecole to talk about a "national character" at length, but since Philibert de l'Orme (and particularly in the eighteenth century) French architects have talked incessantly about the Frenchness of their architecture. The whole section about the principles and methods illustrated by the projects could have been omitted to the book's advantage. Egbert would have been better served by his editor, David van Zanten, if editorial control had been more ruthless: since editing and publishing this book was something of a work of piety, it could also have been extended with an account of how students went to Rome before the institution of the competition, and how the early prizewinners fared.

But then, *de mortuis*... Egbert was much loved, as is clear from the memoir by David van Zanten and the tribute from Robert Venturi: why do I bother to speak ill of him and the book which occupied his last years? Only because it has, I feel, been so carefully trimmed to cater to the new vogue for the grandiose architectural drawing - and even more, for a lost world when architects asked for beauty and the rules seemed unchanging. But they only ever seemed so. And the historian of the institutions which embody the mother of the arts must, I feel, be extremely sensitive to any such changes: not tugging them into the belief that you can get by with such shifty notions. If there is a classical tradition to be isolated in architecture it must be both a much more turbulent, and much grander thing than is precepted by this book.

Starting from the facts

By Frances Spalding

CHARLES HARRISON:
English Art & Modernism 1900-1939
416pp. Allen Lane. £20.
0 7139 0792 4

English art of this century owes much of its initial impulse to the Victorian "subject" picture. Had the love of story-telling in paint not reached such melodramatic pitch and gained such popularity and rewards through the sale of engravings, it is unlikely that early twentieth-century artists would have spun quite so fast in the opposite direction into the arms of abstract art. After the First World War had undermined the confidence and momentum of this initial avant-garde, Wyndham Lewis found his earlier geometries looked "bleak and empty", in need of "filling". With hindsight, extreme modernism seemed a prefiguration of the inhumanity of war; its brittle fragmentation of form seemed a devaluation of subject matter and all its human associations. Art, it was felt, had turned its back on life.

This problem vexed both artists and critics. Paul Nash observed that as his landscape approached abstraction they suffered a certain impoverishment. Roger Fry, having freed English art from the need for mimetic verisimilitude, spent the last twenty years of his career reconsidering the role of representation. The revival of landscape painting in the 1920s can be seen as a temporary flight from the machine age. It was followed in the 1930s by a reassembling of a new avant-garde who pushed again towards abstraction. To a still younger generation, the abstract art of Nicholson, Hepworth and others looked rarefied and out of touch with the worsening political climate. Desiring a wider audience, the young William Coldstream concluded in 1938, "Public art must mean realism".

Such it would seem is Charles Harrison's conclusion at the end of his major study of English art 1900-1939. For him "vividness in representation must entail the reconciliation of technical concerns... with the requirements of realistic description". It therefore comes as a surprise to discover that the heroes in this book are not William Coldstream and his Euston Road School colleagues but Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. Harrison does not use his conclusion as a formula against which to test each artist discussed: instead he often avoids judgment and settles for a descriptive account. But like Ruskin, his approach is one of high seriousness, purposeful, authoritative and occasionally dogmatic. He brings to this study not only impressive scholarship but also his years of experience as an art critic, an exhibition organizer (of, among other shows, the Ben Nicholson retrospective held at the Tate Gallery in 1969), and as a member of Art Language, the movement in art devoted not to its making but to discourse about the discourse of art. Where this

book differs from its predecessors, notably from Dennis Farr's *English Art 1870-1940*, is in its selectivity and its detailed consideration of the context of ideas surrounding artistic production. It enables the author to perceive, for instance, a mutual radicalism beneath the quarrel between the abstract artists and the Surrealists in the 1930s: the ideal harmony of the former carrying an implicit critique of social incoherence and the irrationality of the latter subverting bourgeois concepts of reason and order. If only a very broad interpretation of which could justify Harrison's simultaneous praise of Camden Town social realism and Ben Nicholson's white reliefs.

The subject itself feeds upon paradox and confusion. Charles Harrison uncovers the theoretical incoherence behind modernism in English art, the idealistic reasoning, the adaptation of ideas from Russia and Germany without full understanding of the historical necessities that lay behind their formation. He admits it is unlikely that a unity between theory and practice will exist at any one moment. He warns against the tendency to think simply in terms of reactionaries and progressives, citing Sickert as an example of an artist who straddled the modern and the traditional. Instead, the argument crystallizes into those who upheld the cultural autonomy of art and those who, like Sickert, thought it should be underpinned by reference to the world of "gross material facts".

Autonomy in art is, however, easily over-emphasized for the sake of argument. Harrison takes Whistler as his first representative and reproduces *The Falling Rocket* over the artist's statement that the painting is "an arrangement of line, form and colour first". But what he does not add is that the picture is secondarily of Cremorne Gardens at night, a popular pleasure-ground not for London's upper crust but for the lower end of society, and the haunt of prostitutes. Whistler's paintings of Cremorne Gardens, Chelsea backstreets and his etchings of non-tourist Venice contain enough social realism to modify received opinion on this artist. As Harrison himself argues, when he astutely questions Sickert's statement that the artist should have no preferences, what an artist sees depends on where he goes, and where he goes is to some extent dependent on choice.

Roger Fry's desire for greater autonomy in art brings him, too, under attack. Alert to the unfortunate tendency to confuse Clive Bell's bold assertions with Fry's more qualified thought, Harrison nevertheless falls into over-simplification when outlining Fry's position. He accuses him of preserving aesthetic experience as a minority interest. Fry did admit that the aesthetic sensibility in most men was "comparatively weak" but he did not say (as Clive Bell did) that the mass of mankind cannot make aesthetic judgments. He perceived that the self-reliant reality presented by much modern art was at first unsympathetic to an English audience used to regarding painting merely as a starting-point for associative rumination. His aim was to purify art of these obfuscating associations in order to make it eventually more accessible, an aim that his career as one of the great popularizers of art clearly upheld.

Harrison is forced to make subtle distinctions between those who harness modernism to expressive, vital purposes and those who allow it to dwindle into an autonomous end in itself. Of the two Vorticists, Lévi and Humberg, the former is praised for transforming human action into an abstract force, while the latter, who attempted to sume, is accused of losing the human figure in abstract patterning, producing "a strange bloodless formality". Meanwhile the Vorticist spokesman T.E. Hulme is dismissed for his late-romantic, pessimistic, anti-rational "technocratic Utopianism", which fails to reflect a view of progress based on the concept of class struggle. Judgments like these, so forcefully bowled at figureheads of the modern movement, are provocative and challenging even if not always convincing.

One recurrent dilemma facing the artist was how to remain "true to life" while the stylistic emphasis of modernism led towards non-representation. It could be argued that in 1914 Cubism came into its own, finding a subject matter that matched its aggressive treatment. But before long the war-artists felt obliged to modify their avant-garde styles in order to convey more information about their subject. The Cubist element that remained in the work of William Roberts is criticized by Harrison as "a habit of formalization rather than a process of critical transformation". Artistic progress did not always fit with the realistic demands of the subject, and in the confused post-war period the author is quick to draw attention to "pseudo-liberalism", the vaunting of principles of tolerance in the absence of theory.

Where this book makes its most substantial contribution to the history of English art is in its treatment of the inter-war period. Charles Harrison combines extensive original research with deeply-considered appreciation as he traces the evolution of the 7 & 5 Society, the formation of Unit One, the brief but condensed career of Christopher Wood and the gradual ascendancy of Moore, Hepworth, Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. His seriousness of approach, however, narrows his field of vision: Stanley Spencer is too unsophisticated for his taste and Lowry is never mentioned. He tends to evaluate painting or sculpture according to the intellectual demands made upon the spectator. Predictably, he admires Nash for his articulate handling of unsentimental subjects and Nicholson for, among other things, his pursuit of an extreme clarity.

With Nicholson's white reliefs of the mid-1930s we reach what is for Harrison the high point in British art in the first half of this century. He draws our attention to their logical development of Cubism, their monumental quality, as well as their possible debt to the artist's memory of white-painted cottages, studios, architecture and the sunlit snow at Ticino. He also admits their paradox: while being assertively substantial they evoke a world in which material identity is idealized almost out of existence. They are the ultimate in modernism, refined, remote and revolutionary in that they were seen to reflect a belief in social reconstruction. But Geoffrey Grigson, whom Harrison quotes, perceived their limitation: "an image of infinity, ordered by saying 'no' rather than 'yes'... Admirable in technical qualities, in taste, in severe self-expurgation, but too much 'art itself', floating and disinfected." Like Mondrian's paintings, these reliefs which sought universal expression had no appeal. And in reaction against them, the Euston Road School was founded to produce a realism that would engage a wider public.

Even if the majority of Charles Harrison's evaluations do not differ markedly from those made in previous studies of this period, he makes a provocative and very necessary attempt to separate modernism from its mannerisms: to discern that which is historically specific from that which merely adopts schematic handling to give it a veneer of modernity. The solid achievement of his book represents what check the art historian's automatic tendency to regard the abstract as the more advanced. The author reminds his readers that the monumentality of the great French Post-Impressionists rests not only on their formal innovations but also on their choice of traditional, social subjects. By implication, the way forward may involve a return to the heart-tugging appeal of Victorian narrative painting.

James Michie

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Revolution as melodrama

By George Schöpplin

DAVID IRVING:
Uprising!
One Nation's Nightmare: Hungary 1956
628pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £13.50.
0 340 18313 6

Before setting out to write this book, David Irving had no experience of either Hungarian affairs or of the special problems raised by the nature of communist systems. His acquaintance with Hungary and Hungarian matters, let alone the Hungarian language, was self-evidently slight. One could have expected, therefore, that Irving would have tackled his selected field of research with some care, with some awareness of the potential pitfalls and some recognition that the cultural differences between communist Hungary and the West were both subtle and significant. On all these points, however, Irving's book does not measure up. It is fair to say that he fails to do justice to his subject through wilfulness, ignorance and arrogance.

Irving's style is popular journalism at its worst. Chapter 1 opens with the words: "The glass crunches and slithers beneath his shoes as he prods open the polished door marked 'Minister' with his sub-machine gun." Throughout the book, there is an emphasis on the dramatic or sensational—at times one has the feeling that Irving would much sooner avoid analysis of events altogether. The amount of detail paraded in page upon page has not only made the book interminably long—550 pages of text—but it is also superfluous, included merely for effect, or as an easy way of lending verisimilitude to certain sections which would otherwise be unconvincing. Irving's pseudo-dramatic approach relies on the use of the historic present and imaginary scenes. "Rákosi hoisted with laughter. His velvety grey eyes momentarily lost their deceptively benevolent, humane allure. . . . How does Irving know that while delivering his infamous 'salami tactics' speech in 1952, Rákosi 'hoisted' and that, for a moment, his eyes lost their deceptive allure? (It so happens that I stood face to face with Rákosi once, just after the war, and I do not remember any kind of allure in his eyes.)

The book is not helped either by the disagreeable manner in which Irving deals with the Jewish aspect of his subject. In a brief "Who was who in Hungary" (pages 13-16) a fair number of persons are labelled "Jewish". The list is inaccurate in places—some of the people who are not described as Jewish were Jewish and at least one person whom Irving calls Jewish was not Jewish. He says of Rákosi that he "had all the tact of a kosher butcher": why? Are kosher butchers notoriously or even self-evidently less tactful than non-kosher butchers? Indeed, do butchers by definition epitomize tactlessness? The implication is, I think, clear. Later in the book, Irving puzzlingly describes someone as an "ex-Jewish student". It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, for Irving, all Jews in Hungary have to be labelled as such, in order to hint at particular qualities that they purportedly possess—as far as Irving is concerned, these qualities are negative ones.

This attitude plays an important role in his interpretation of the Hungarian events as a whole. Put very simply, his argument is that Hungarian communism was the creation of Jews, and that the 1956 events were anti-communist and therefore anti-Jewish. This is a misleading oversimplification. The interrelationship of the non-Jewish majority of Hungarians, Communists, the Left, the Soviet Union and communist Jews as well as non-communist Jews is one of enormous complexity and sensitivity. Irving is seemingly reluctant to confront it and to undertake the necessary deeper analysis of a long historical process; to look for instance at the nature of Jewish assimilation in nineteenth-century Hungary and its intimate links with entrepreneurial development; at the emergence of an assimilated middle class and its relationship to the ruling elite; at the association in the minds of many Hungarians, Jews and non-Jews alike, of the 1919 Soviet Republic with Jews and Bolshevism; at the impact of the holocaust and the re-emergence after 1944 of the remnants of the Jewish community into the troubled era of the communist takeover.

Irving's simple, even crude methodology is applied, in other areas as well. How easily he compresses the convoluted developments of 1944-45: "... when the first elections were held on November 4, 1945, several parties contended and there was therefore a secret ballot." What is the significance of the "therefore"? Is Irving arguing that a secret ballot was held because there were several parties? If he is—and I cannot see that his words will bear any other construction—he is utterly wrong. It has never been satisfactorily explained why free elections were permitted by the Hungarian CP and the Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission; various theories have been put forward, but no one has claimed that it was because there were several parties in contention. A more plausible explanation is that the more plausible explanation is that the communists and the Soviet Union underestimated their electoral unpopularity and expected wrongly that the Party, or at least the left as a whole, would win a majority.

Irving's ignorance of events and individuals is a source of constant difficulty. He describes Pál János, one of those caught up in the Rákosi purge and an ex-Communist, as "hosting for the communists". This alone would be sufficient to disqualify Irving from being taken seriously as a historian of Hungarian affairs. Justus, a left-revolutionary and Trotskyist sympathizer, was detected by the communists, a feeling he reciprocated, and his role in the Rákosi trial was attributed to this old enmity. Irving says of Cardinal Mindszenty that he was "known for his pronounced anti-Semitic views as Bishop of Veszprém and for failing to protest at the deportation of Jews in 1944—or so a US intelligence report from Budapest stated confidentially in November 1945". Note the technique used here: Irving seemingly covers himself by attributing his comment to US intelligence, but one might have expected him to have checked this against other sources of information—not least Mindszenty's own *Memoirs* listed by Irving—and discovered Mindszenty's very respectable record. In describing the proceedings at the Rákosi trial, Irving has Rákosi declare, "My grandfather being of Saxon descent, wrote his name 'Reich'". First, he misquotes the official, English-language record of the trial, where he could have read: "My grandfather being of Saxon descent, wrote his name as Reich". Second, Irving obviously does not realise that the reference is not to Saxony, but to Transylvania—Rákosi's family was of Transylvanian Saxon origin.

Irving is concerned to show that the events of 1956 were not a revolution but an uprising, that its leader Imre Nagy was an unrepentant *aparatchik* not much better than his predecessors and that the whole affair was little more than an accident. In this connection he uses a statement by Trotsky to the effect that a mass movement which has no clear aims, "deliberated methods of struggle" or leadership, is only an insurrection. Yet even on Irving's own evidence, October 1956 amounted to something more than an uprising.

The aims of the revolution were clear enough—the creation of a political system capable of meeting the challenge of mass politics through institutional democracy. This could be seen in the demands of the various student groups, the writers and, above all, in the programmes of the workers' councils which sprang up spontaneously in industrial centres throughout Hungary. On the question of "deliberated methods of struggle", Irving fails to understand that because events moved so rapidly in 1956—entailing both the disintegration of the Party as a ruling force and the radicalization of the people—no clear-cut one could have been developed in the time available. In effect, the chief weapon became the street demonstration. The weakness of Nagy's leadership is, of course, very evident, but he did have ideas of the kind of political change he wanted and the kind of society he would have liked Hungary to have become. But he lacked the personality and character to put his ideas into effect.

That did not however make him into a typical communist functionary. Irving disqualifies himself from passing judgment on Nagy's ideas by his admission that he finds Nagy's writings incomprehensible. If he had been capable of understanding Nagy's admittedly tortuous prose he might have discovered that much of his thinking possessed an originality and freshness which, had it been applied in Hungary, might have saved that country many of the travails of Stalinism.

One of the most extraordinary passages comes on page 215, where Irving writes: "One squall of rain, one gust of biting autumn cold [sic], would have driven these crowds home. It might all never have happened." The passage refers to the events of October 23, when enormous crowds took to the streets of Budapest and started the revolution. Irving spends much energy in describing the pent-up frustrations of years of repression and deprivation endured by the majority of Hungarians, and then ignores everything he has just vividly said in concluding that the weather might easily have affected the revolution.

From this book Irving emerges as a pamphleteer (it is a very long pamphlet, to be sure), who shows neither imagination nor responsibility towards his subject. His human figures are not drawn in black and white, but only black—there is not one person in the book about whom Irving has anything positive to say. There is no evidence of any attempt to understand either Hungary or the Hungarian people. The book is poorly organized, often confused and relies heavily on melodramatic叙述. It has little to add to our knowledge and nothing to our understanding of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Local Politics in Communist Countries (230pp. The University Press of Kentucky, \$17.50, 0 8131 1398 9) is a collection of papers by eight specialists who have "addressed themselves to the issues of political participation and policymaking roles at sub-national levels in states where they have done extensive field research". The book is edited by Daniel N. Nelson, who has also contributed an article on "Citizen Participation in Romania: The People's Council Deputy", and a "Conclusion"—"Participatory and Policy-making Dilemmas in Local Communist Politics". Among the other articles in this collection are Joel C. Moses' "Local Leadership Integration in the Soviet Union", Jan. F. Triska and Ana Babiak's "Evaluating Citizen Participation at the Community Level: The Role of Party Affiliation in Yugoslavia", Jaroslav Fiala's "Polish Local Politics in the Concentration or Deconcentration and Victor C. Falkenheim's "Decentralization and Control in Chinese Local Administration". In his concluding remarks Professor Nelson writes: "In a sense, then, this volume has pointed to dynamic elements of communist politics too often ignored because of the centralist exterior of ruling communist parties, i.e., those found in the central/local relationship. . . . To be sure, the balance of power is heavily tipped on the side of central institutions and elites. I research such as reported in this volume says anything, however, it is that the behavior of those central institutions and leaders in communist states will be strongly affected by participatory and policy dilemmas which arise from local politics, as influence we can ill afford to ignore when we analyze such regimes".



Among this week's contributors

FLEUR ADCOCK's most recent collection of poems, *The Inner Harbour*, was published last year.

COLIN AMERY is the architectural critic of the *Financial Times*, and co-author, with Dan Cruikshank, of *The Rape of Britain*, 1978.

S.L. ANDREWS is Professor of Sociology at Reading University and is the author of *Social Sciences as Sorcery*, 1972.

PAUL BAILEY's novels include *At the Jerusalem*, 1967, and *Old Soldiers*, 1980.

CHRISTOPHER BOOKER's most recent book, *The Games War: A Moscow Journal*, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

BRUCE BOUCHER is a lecturer in the History of Art at University College London and a regular contributor to the *Burlington Magazine*.

BARBARA BRAY was formerly Script Editor for BBC Radio Drama.

ANITA BRONKHORST's books include *Greuze: The Rise and Fall of an Eighteenth-Century Phenomenon*, 1972, and *Jacques Louk David*, 1981.

PAUL CARTLEDGE is the author of *Sparta and Lakonia: A Regional History 1300-362 BC*, 1979.

MARTIN CADBELL's *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* was published last year.

PATRICIA CRAIG's critical study *The Lady Investigator: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, a collaboration with Mary Cadogan, was published in February.

RUSSELL DAVIES is the television critic of the *Sunday Times*.

TOM DISCH's most recent novel is *On Wings of Song*, 1979.

DOUGLAS DURN's new collection of poems, *St Kilda's Parliament*, will be published by Faber later this year.

JOHN FORRESTER is the author of *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 1980.

PETER GREENHAM is Keeper of the Royal Academy Schools. His portrait of F. R. Leavis is in *Downing College*, Cambridge.

ROBERT HEWISON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* is reviewed in this week's TLS.

SMON HORNBLOWER is a Fellow of Oriole College, Oxford.

MARK P. JONES is Assistant Keeper at the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum. His most recent book is *The Dance of Death: Medallions of the First World War*, 1979.

ROGER JONES is a lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Manchester.

JULIA KAVANAGH is Reviews Editor of *Harpers and Queen*.

PETER MACKROBIE is a lecturer in Modern Greek at the University of Oxford.

PHILIP MASON's books include *Kipling: the Chase and the Fire*, 1975.

RICHARD MAYNE's books include *The Europeans*, 1973, and a translation of Jean Monnet's *Memoirs*, 1978.

JAMES MICHIE's translation of La Fontaine's *Selected Fables*, was published in 1979.

J. MORDAUNT CROOK's *William Burgess and the High Victorian Dream* will be published by John Murray in June.

JANET MORGAN is the editor of Richard Crossman's *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 1976-7, and *The Backbench Diaries of Richard Crossman* which has just been published.

LES A. MURRAY's books include *Selected Poems: The Vernacular Republic*, 1976.

STEPAN MUTHUSILIS is a lecturer in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of East Anglia.

NICHOLAS PÉNNY is currently Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford. He is co-author, with Francis Haskell, of *Taste and the Antique*, reviewed in this week's TLS.

TOM PHILLIPS's *A Humument: A Treatment of a Victorian Novel* was published last year.

RONALD PICKWAVE is Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Glasgow.

MICHAEL PODRO's books include *The Manifold in Perception*, 1972.

PETER PORTER's most recent collection of poems, *English Sub-Titles*, was published last month.

S. S. PRAWER's books include *Karl Marx and World Literature*, 1967, and *Collier's Children: the Film as Tale of Terror*, 1980.

BENEDICT READ is Deputy Writ Librarian at the Courtauld Institute.

GRAHAM REYNOLDS's books include *A Concise History of Watercolour Painting*, 1972.

SIR JAMES RICHARDS was editor of *The Architectural Review* from 1937 to 1971.

PAT ROGERS's books include *Henry Ford: A Biography*, 1979.

JOSEPH RYKWERF's most recent book is *The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century*, 1980.

FRANCES SPALDINO's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

J. I. M. STEWART's novels include *The Gaudy*, 1974, *The Madonna* and *Asphodel*, 1977, and *Full Term*, 1978.

GEORGE SCHÖPPLIN is Lecturer in East European Political Institutions at the London School of Economics and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies.

STEPHEN STICH is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland.

DAVID TROTTER is the author of *The Poetry of Abraham Cowley*, 1980.

DAVID WALKER is co-author, with André Gorman, of *The Architecture of Glasgow*, 1968.

ROBERT HEWISON:
In Anger
Culture in the Cold War 1945-60
230pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0 297 77890 0

There's nothing so dead as the day before yesterday. Too recent to be history, but too remote for many to remember, it resembles the "skip distance" familiar to radio engineers—beyond the horizon and out of range of direct transmission, but still too close for signals bounced off the ionosphere. As time goes by, however, memory's skip distance shortens. The nostalgia industry feeds ever more greedily on the fairly recent past, and fashions now-adays have scarcely faded before they're revived. Miss'll soon be a comeback. How long will it take pop musicians to rediscover punk rock, painters to revert to environments and happenings, and clothes designers to extend *la mode retro* so as to include flared jeans?

The decade-and-a-half that followed the Second World War certainly seems due for reevaluation. In many respects, it was the seedbed of our present world. Our war aims had brought us to be utopian, at home and abroad. National efforts to build a better future soon showed us the impossibility of going it alone, and within five years we established most of today's international institutions. In Germany and Italy, democracy replaced dictatorship. In Eastern Europe, Communist regimes ousted democracy. Europe and the world were both divided by the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West. Former colonies began to achieve freedom; new world powers flexed their muscles; Western Europeans set out on their quest for unity. Technology brought both wealth and drawbacks, including greater dependence on imported oil. Social change caused tension, its slowest led to protest. High noon looked less promising than dawn.

Art and literature, meanwhile, evolved slowly—at least in Britain. The early postwar years continued to celebrate the prewar names. The wartime crop of poems and stories, harvested mainly in magazines like *Penguin New Writing*, seemed now to shrivel. Some young writers had died in the war, others, now in "demob suits", may have found that they had less leisure—and duller material—than when they were in uniform. Not until the 1950s, in fact, did new and distinctive voices seem to impose themselves on a jaded literary scene.

Such is the general framework of Robert Hewison's detailed, absorbing, and rather provoking book. His earlier effort, *Under Siege*, was an equally comprehensive but more satisfying survey of literary and artistic life in London during Hitler's war. I felt I had found writing I was—mapping, for instance, Fitzroy's network of favourite pubs, and vividly evoking the shabby-bohemian atmosphere created by isolation and lack of challenge. In that sense, wartime London was as provincial as wartime Paris, and minor bohemians looked big. As an emblem of the period, Hewison shrewdly praised Julian Maclaren-Ross, whose talent was tragically wasted but whose test work, including his Army stories, had enormous life and sparkle. Poetic and alcoholic he may have been at the end, but even as a critic and parodist Maclaren-Ross deserves a niche in history. His *Memoirs of the Forties* provided the starting-point, and the key-signature, for Hewison's *Under Siege*.

The postwar period has less unity; and with it, *In Anger*, Robert Hewison's touch seems less sure. His photograph, on the back flap of the dust-jacket, makes him look like a plump-faced, springy-haired, severe-spectacled bird of prey. He clasps a book like a card-index is an important tool of his hovering, pouncing trade. He can certainly snap up choice quotations. Geoffrey Faber, 1948:

"As a nation, or an island group of nations, we have suddenly exchanged riches for poverty, and power for insecurity. This change in our status has come as a reward for our 'finest hour'. Until we have realistically and courageously adjusted ourselves to it, we are not likely to produce very much worthwhile literature."

Kathleen Raine, 1949: "Most of the critical writing of the 1940s has been journal-

ism—that is, addressed to a public assumed to know less than the author himself." V. S. Pritchett, 1953: "The legend of the literary minority [illegibly enjoyed by London] is a great consolation to that passion of envy which regularly visits the outskirts of literary society." Penelope Houston, 1955:

Tolerance and trust in compromise, the hallmarks of the English character, work against the 'engaged' artist in any medium; so does that celebrated English custom of ignoring a disagreeable fact, on the assumption that if left alone it may quietly go away. All this means that many areas of experience are closed off to the British film-maker. A no less significant issue, and one affecting the whole picture of life that we are given on the screen, is the intriguing and unmentionable subject of class.

David Sylvester, 1957:

What if [current British art] adds up to is something as remote from the rest of modern painting as British films are from real films. This is largely because it has an absence of attack and earnestness, a sort of stiff-upper-lipped art. So that when we arrive at the far end of Gallery XVIII and come upon two Bratys, which have not got this atmosphere of doing the done thing and please do not spit and gentlemen lift the seat, we feel for the first time that we are looking at paintings, paintings in the ordinary sense of the word.

T.C. Worsley, 1959: "The research begun at the Royal Court—four years ago was [it]—has finally been perfected. The English play can now break through the class barrier at will. The objective has been achieved. Now the question is, what is going to be done with the ability?"

My own answer to that question would be: "not much, but quite a lot of stale propaganda." Robert Hewison's is: "The plays of Arnold Wesker's trilogy." Oh, well. But many of Hewison's remarks are more to the point—as when he reminds us that 1947 was "the end of the phoney peace". Of *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman* he declares: "By writing in verse Eliot wished to raise the emotional intensity; but elevated speech conflicted with a naturalistic setting, and he progressively toned down the poetic element until it was so camouflaged that there seemed little to be gained from writing in verse at all." On the abortive "new voices" in painting, he declares: "The little that has been written about British post-war art is so dominated by the arrival of Abstract Expressionism from America in the mid-1950s that it is difficult to appreciate that there was a period between the decline of Neo-Romanticism and the rise of Abstract Expressionism when attempts were made to steer painting in another direction." On 1950s novels about scenes of provincial life in which lucky Jim Ginter men are happy as Larry, to escape from under the net, abandon the world's game, and hurry on down the primrose path to join in the breaking of Bumbo before finishing room at the top: "Without wishing to impose a Freudian reading, it would appear that the intellectual children of the Welfare State were rejecting their parents." "But", he adds,

there were other factors besides a negative reaction to the ideas of the earlier generation that encouraged a less committed stance. Economic factors, meant that it was virtually impossible to live by one's art alone; as a result it was necessary to make some accommodation with the institutions of the Welfare State.

He is equally sharp on Baling comedies: "During the war the image of a socially cohesive and purposeful nation had been terms less sure. His photograph, on the back flap of the dust-jacket, makes him look like a plump-faced, springy-haired, severe-spectacled bird of prey. He clasps a book like a card-index is an important tool of his hovering, pouncing trade. He can certainly snap up choice quotations. Geoffrey Faber, 1948:

"As a nation, or an island group of nations, we have suddenly exchanged riches for poverty, and power for insecurity. This change in our status has come as a reward for our 'finest hour'. Until we have realistically and courageously adjusted ourselves to it, we are not likely to produce very much worthwhile literature."

Flitting through the Fifties

By Richard Mayne

It mis-spells Reynier Banham's first name, then gives it as "Roger" in the index. It turns Alain Tanner, the Swiss film director, into "Alain Turner". It describes Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as "judged from Alan Sillitoe's stories [sic] of working class life". It calls Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall a "right-wing military thinker". Hewison even travesties logical positivism, implying that it was anti-ethical (and perhaps even immoral) as well as anti-metaphysical. More generally, he seems to take at face value facile assertions about "epochs", "progress" and "new generations"—like the metaphor-laden trend-hunter's lament that he quotes from Alan Ross (1951):

"The present is a time of disenchantment for the writer. Religious, political and psycho-analytical formulas have lost both their novelty and practical effectiveness. Marxism has deteriorated into a cliché. Western civilization, dead ground between the United States and the totalitarian State, threatens to become a bog. Poets, not unnaturally, have become increasingly reluctant to acknowledge any specific descriptive label. The bridges have given way too often, the signposts proved misleading. At the moment there is neither a single major influence over modern poetry nor a contemporary movement."

This "he-that-is-not-with-me-is-against-me" attitude makes the post resemble a bleached-out photograph—dramatic, but over-simplified and crude. It may be due to "the generation gap". Born in 1943, Hewison was still a child when *Hurry on Down, Lucky Jim*, and *Look Back in Anger* challenged the blandness of the 1950s. Does this explain, too, his apparent *naïveté* about the Communist Party and his animus against its opponents? "The British government ordered a purge of Communists from the Civil Service at the beginning of 1949, of which the most prominent victim was the eminent scientist J. B. S. Haldane; a similar prejudice [sic] was felt in academic circles." "In September 1953 *Encounter* was launched as the house magazine of Conservative intellectual orthodoxy. . . . Indeed, *Encounter* was born middle-aged; the source of its funds was not nearly as significant as the convinced anti-Communism of the people who ran it. *Encounter's* negative conservatism matched the times."

So let's be clear. In Hewison's book, to be "a-political" is to be "reactionary", perhaps even "Fascist". The Communist Party is as legitimate as any other. To be "anti-Communist" (i.e., pro-liberty and quite likely pro-Labour) is not only to be "conservative" (upper or lower case), but also to be getting on in years. This last, from trend-hunters, is a pretty unanswerable charge.

Not that Hewison, finally, denies his opponents a hearing. He quotes at length, disapprovingly, Noel Annan's fairly partisan praise, in 1955, of Britain's "intellectual aristocracy"—"accustomed to responsible and judicious utterance and sceptical of iconoclastic speculation". He even quotes, with still greater distaste, "Cold War purists of the Movement like Robert Conquest", whose 1958 strictures on "The New Left" seem very apposite today:

"The few writers who grapple with great public issues—ie who present intolerable over-generalizations instead of realities—are mainly either near-Communists or people who regard everything of which they disapprove as the result of a vast social conspiracy—not to put too fine a point on it, crackpots. The train of thought in political comment is as follows: (1) I am against injustice, (2) therefore I am a socialist, (3) because 'socialism' is the way to prevent oppression any action preserve it is justified, (4) including injustice."

I don't intend to imply that these hard words fit Hewison. Much of his book, as I've said, is very acute. But I do hope that his third volume shows less blatant, Left-wing bias. To straggle up and fly right—ie truly—culture-vultures need to beat both wings at once.

Trend-hunting, moreover, can lead to serious distortions. *In Anger* is subtitled "Culture in the Cold War". The suggestion is that "the Cold War" decisively conditioned the arts of the period: Hewison actually says as much, several times.

Most British publishers contributed at least one Cold War volume in the following years: in the serious newspapers and magazines and scare stories in the popular ones, created an atmosphere in which there was safety in conformity, and no encouragement at all to think freely.

That's not the way I remember it. But, fortified with quotations from such partisan witnesses as Doris Lessing and E. P. Thompson, Hewison goes on—and on. "Logical Positivism promoted the ethics of the Cold War." "Creatively frozen by the economic and political conditions of the Cold War, more and more writers found themselves teaching rather than writing English literature." "The persistence of the old names was bound to have a dulling effect on cultural activity already suffering from economic restriction and the pressures of Cold War politics."

The attitudes of the Movement poets reflect the restrictive conditions of the Cold War. . . . The Cold War tended to freeze public attitudes, and counselled silence about private ones. It recommended a guarded private life, in which only small gestures were possible, gestures chiefly about the difficulty of making a gesture about the problems of the Movement poets with the problems of perception and expression.

"Hence?" You could have fooled me. No one I can recall at that time was "restricted" or "guarded" as a result of the

One minor reason is his occasional errors and omissions. It misdates, for instance, a quotation from Anthony Hartley, then the *Spectator's* verse critic, whom I rather lampooned as a celebrant of "The Move-

ment". It mis-spells Reynier Banham's first name, then gives it as "Roger" in the index. It turns Alain Tanner, the Swiss film director, into "Alain Turner". It describes Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as "judged from Alan Sillitoe's stories [sic] of working class life". It calls Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall a "right-wing military thinker". Hewison even travesties logical positivism, implying that it was anti-ethical (and perhaps even immoral) as well as anti-metaphysical. More generally, he seems to take at face value facile assertions about "epochs", "progress" and "new generations"—like the metaphor-laden trend-hunter's lament that he quotes from Alan Ross (1951):

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A colonial at Covent Garden

By Peter Porter

NELLIE MITCHELL: Melodist and Memoirist
With introduction and notes by John Cargher
253pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.
0 241 104106

Once you have grasped that Edna Everage is the reincarnation of Nellie Melba, you will be able to get more out of this review of the great diva's memoirs. Their twin identity shines across the intervening years. Both superstars became Dames of the British Empire and remain to this day the most famous female Australians; each has a shadowy, hardly mentioned husband in the background, though Melba was divorced from hers early on; having made her name abroad, each spends her life touring the world and revisiting Australia to clamorous acclaim; each is an intimate terms with royalty and celebrities of every kind; each personifies that combination of virtuosity, populism and ruthlessness which has made Australian adventurers feared throughout the world.

There is a great deal about Melba as artist which must be taken seriously, but so little of this is to be found in her memoirs that it is worthwhile developing more fully the comparison with the still unfaded Dame Edna. Here are a few quotations from Melba's account of her life and adventures: On Edward VII and his court—"How absolutely natural they were, those rulers of England." On being presented to the Royal Box in Brussels after her operatic premiere—"My first Queen!" On a legless soldier who had travelled miles and scraped every penny together to hear her in the out-back—"Dear Jim Styles, I am thinking of you... you have the soul of a poet." On Antipathetic life—"Nobody in England or America has any idea of the intensity of the servant problem in the Southern Hemisphere."

Like Dame Edna, Melba is less an artist than a member of that small band identified by the late Ken Tynan as high performance stars. Their art opens doors for them and their democratic beginnings train them in the business of wooing larger audiences. They control the idolaters by alternating the kiss and the scratch. Melba is ecstatic in her memoirs about the de Reszke brothers, Madame Marchesi, Nikisch, Caruso and the leaders of London and Paris society, though we learn nothing about the art of any of the famous names she runs through. Other artists—those who crossed her, or those whom she owed too much, or simply those she thought no longer mattered—get ungenerous treatment. Poor Sir London Ronald and her forgotten flautist-manager, John Lemmon, share

the role of accompanist-but to the superstar. Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* is to her what a bunch of gladiators is to Dame Edna. And her culinary triumphs may well outlast her successor's, since the "Pêche Melba" is still with us.

It is hard to know how great a singer Melba was. Her recordings leave you with mixed feelings. They are not good as recorded sound even for their time. As you listen to them, you feel that Melba is holding something back; perhaps she understood instinctively that recording the full personality of an ambiguous artist. They do establish, however, that she possessed a strikingly pure and accurate voice. Listening to her in "Ah l'on! l'on!" and "Sempere libera" from *Traviata*, one wonders at the superb instinct which guides the refined thread of voice through the delta of difficulty which defeats so many sopranos. Yet many of her contemporaries found her singing cold, and though in her early years on the stage she was a striking and sexually assertive woman, the more discriminating came away from her performances dissatisfied, feeling that they had missed the heart of the composer's intention. It is appropriate that her memoirs, written for an American magazine in 1925, should be published now. Ours is the age of heartless efficiency and tight-rope-walking virtuosity in music, though this is truer of instrumental than of vocal technique. Today, no singer before the public today with Melba's laser-like purity of sound. One has to look to non-musical fellow-Australians, such as Rod Laver, to find perfection like hers.

Melba (née Nellie Mitchell) was born to a family of dispersed Scots. She grew up near Melbourne, married George Armstrong when she was twenty-one and lived briefly in Mackay, Queensland, which is by no means an Athens of the North. She was well-trained in Melbourne by a singing-teacher she chose to neglect in later life the better to encourage the cult of Marchesi, and sailed for London in 1886, at the age of twenty-five. Her training and taste were essentially French, and her early triumphs were in Brussels and Paris. She grasped quickly enough that success in London was a social undertaking, not an artistic one, and she owed her Covent Garden rise to Lady de Grey and an amenable upper-class cabal. Her memoirs chart the speed of her rise to fame and its apparent irresistibility. She remained an operatic superstar for forty years, yet a curiously parochial artist, making little impression in Italy and Germany. She writes (wholly without insight) of Puccini and Verdi, but she seldom ventured to La Scala. She has hard things to say about the Italian operatic tradition, and fails to see that, in its intellectual way, it enriched a more genuine way of making music than did the French and English modes, with their

Jockey Club expectations and their vague pretentiousness (even as far as Wagner).

Melba's memoirs have been edited and sensibly annotated by John Cargher, a familiar voice on Australian radio. From him, we hear of her affair with the Duc D'Orléans, something Melba herself never mentions. Nobody should approach her pages looking for musical or even social enlightenment. She rebukes the conservatism of English taste but shows no sign of appreciation of the talkmanic names she conjures up—Wagner, Chausson, and Ravel. Her sneers at Donizetti come ill from someone who triumphed in *Lucia* and who loved to play in Gounod's operatic warhorses. Perhaps her natural readership will be among Australians, who will want to know how a girl from the colonies made the transition to European greatness. She remained strongly attached to her homeland, and built a baronial mansion for herself outside Melbourne. The most ardent proof of her patriotism remains her stage name. At the height of her success, more people must have known her adopted diminutive than had heard of the city she took it from.

Melodist and Memoirist was partly prepared by her secretary and amanuensis, Beverley Nichols, who is his novel *Evening*, published a year after Melba's death, offered a much less cosy picture of her. *Evening* remains a fascinating book, but the old idiosyncrasy of the memoirist has a fascination of their own as well.

From memsahib to literary lion

By Philip Mason

VIOLET POWELL:
Flora Annie Steel
Novelist of India
172pp. Heinemann. £8.50.
0 434 59957 3

Flora Annie Steel left India at the age of forty-two in 1889, the year before Kipling's *annus mirabilis*, when he became a literary lion at twenty-five. If he had died then, she would hardly be remembered or, if at all, only as an English lady unusual for possessing in a high degree qualities not in themselves unusual. She was bossy, opinionated, kind-hearted, incredibly energetic, quiet without fear and very intelligent. In her more than twenty years in India she had written newspaper articles, some short stories and for British ladies not only on cookery and housekeeping but on first-aid, hygiene, and the obstacles of the domestic cow. And she had started a great many girls' schools and had eventually become inspector of girls' education for the Punjab. All of which was merely to do more of things which quite a number of British wives did in a lesser degree.

But when her husband retired, Flora Annie Steel diverted the main-stream of her energy into writing. Her great success came in 1896, when William Heinemann published *On the Face of the Waters*, a novel about the Indian Mutiny by which won immediate applause, both from the critics and the public. She too became a lion and from then till her death, at eighty-two, there was a steady flow of books—novels, both historical and contemporary, short stories and an autobiography, *The Garden of Fidelity*. In 1919, Heinemann had no less than seventeen books by Flora Annie Steel in print.

On the Face of the Waters was her most successful novel, though some have argued that *The Potter's Thumb* was her finest achievement. (It is not!) *On the Face of the Waters* is packed with excitement and adventure: the main plot is based on actual occurrences and cunningly woven into a pattern of other dated historical events. Flora Annie Steel went back to India for her research, lived in the bazaar to get the local detail right, and went through boxes of official correspondence and reports which had lain untouched since 1858.

The book has been called impartial; but that is not quite the right word for it; rather, it is partial on both sides. Flora Annie Steel was brilliant, indeed unrivalled, at displaying the grievances of the sepoys and the unease of the public—she



Hogarth in this subscription ticket for *Marriage-a-la-Mode* (1743). "Character and Caricature" refers us for a "farther Explanation of the Difference Between Character and Caricature" to the preface to Joseph Andrews in which Fielding commends him highly. The illustration is taken from the book reviewed on page 380.

from lack of leadership and common purpose. The whole book is a good story well told, and informed by historical understanding; there is no better novel about the Indian Mutiny.

Mrs Steel wrote fast and wrote a great deal. Not for her Kipling's meticulous exclusion of every superfluous word. Her people draw themselves up to their full height before saying anything important. The walls of Delhi are always rose-red-though in fact, as Cecil Beaton noticed, they are tongue-coloured, not at all like roses. She is not a stylist. But it would be a mistake to suggest that she was less an artist than an administrator *manqué*; she was both. Her Mughal emperors and their families are, it is true, sometimes oddly like Victorian Deputy Commissioners; she thought the best kind of government was beneficent autocracy; bewilderment of many Indians torn by conflicting loyalties. But she was also unflinching in her conviction that British rule had to be restored, and in her understanding of the passion for revenge among British officers and men, who lumped all the sepoys together as murderers of women and children. She softens the atrocities on both sides. There is only one class of person for whom Flora Annie Steel shows no sympathy, the man at a desk who hesitates to take a decision, or who takes a decision of which she disapproves.

On the Face of the Waters begins brilliantly, with an auction-sale of the elephants and tigers belonging to the King of Oudh, deposited the year before the Mutiny broke out. A white cockatoo that has been taught the Muslim war-cry: *Din! Din! Fateh Mohammed!*—The Faithful Victory to Mohammed!—is brought at a high price to satisfy the idle whim of a passing Englishwoman. The purchase of the bird, indeed the whole auction, is felt by the bystanders to be a deep injustice; the cockatoo, symbol at once of British arrogance and of militant Islam, is kept as a pet by an English child, finds his way to the Emperor's palace in Delhi, and starves to death when the sepoys' cause falls to pieces. On the other hand, there is the strange story of Cudcock, a guard in the Indian railway service, who appeared to her one evening in Scotland, exact in every physical detail, and told her a tale of which she had no previous inkling.

Flora Annie Steel wrote four books about the Mughal superiors, not exactly novels, more like what would now be called documentaries. She stuck closely to recorded facts and is always to be relied on about such matters as crops or the feelings of peasants. But the feelings of her main characters become more and more a projection of her own. This is particularly so in *Mistress of Men*, which narrates the life of Nur Jahan (Light of the World), the wife of Jahangir, Akbar's son. She was both beautiful and clever and was adored by Jahangir. She used her power over him to the utmost to aggrandize her own family, say conventional historians; to spread justice and mercy, says Flora. Nur Jahan had never loved either of her husbands "as a woman can love a man", and in the book she is made to bewail this gap in her experience and also, less convincingly, the beauty which made men desire her.

Flora was extraordinarily forthright and candid about herself in *The Garden of Fidelity*, where she writes: "Why I married I cannot say: I never have been able to say. I do not think either of us was in love. I know I was not; I never have been." Yet she had more than one close Platonic relationship with men-friends and showed signs of jealousy when one of them married. It can hardly be doubted that it was she, not Nur Jahan, who regretted the eunuch she had married and who at the same time liked to feel that she would have preferred to exercise a power based on something other than sexual attraction.

Lady Violet Powell has written a biography of Flora Annie Steel which was needed and which has many virtues, not least that of sending one back to Flora's own books. This book is quite free from the moral anachronism which many so much writing about the British in India gives us a workmanlike account of Flora's life; with most of the plums from *The Garden of Fidelity*, supplemented by additional material provided by Flora's grandson and valuable side-lights from other sources, often presented with a dry wit. Above all, the reader is left with a strong impression of Flora's character and presence, at the end it is as though an old friend had just died, leaving a blank in the place of her wide sympathies, her mixture of unfashioning common-sense and romantic intuition.

But this is a very restrained biography. I, at least, would have like to learn more of Lady Violet's own estimate of Flora both as a woman and as a novelist, and to have had some discussion of the surprising strength of her appeal to the British public. What was it, in the brassy Edwardian period, which made people read *Kim* and *On the Face of the Waters*, with their sympathy both for Hinduism and Islam, their hints of esoteric knowledge of strange sects, their glimpses of an altogether unknown world? Why was it felt proper that Indians should speak in the language of the Authorized Version of the Bible? These are speculative questions, but they deserve discussion.

BRIAN SOUTHAM (Editor):
Jane Austen's 'Sir Charles Grandison'
150pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £7.95.
0 19 812637 9

What is a classic? Apart from everything else, any work by Jane Austen, beloved on all sides and banned by no school of taste—except in Mark Twain's private library. So "Sir Charles Grandison" is instantly a classic, though nobody has yet read it. It arrives 228 years after Sir Charles Grandison, and will soon be known to more people than Richardson's novel. (It is, of course, the more readable; but that is not the reason, exactly.) It comes garnished with a foreword by Lord David Cecil and a critical introduction. It has a "reading text" and a diplomatic transcript of the holograph. There are notes on the manuscript and notes to explain the allusions to Richardson. Signs and conventions require a page supplying a "key" to these mysteries. There are photographic facsimiles and minute physical descriptions. We have a variorum almost before we knew we had the book.

All this is explicable enough. With a writer whose career was so desolatingly brief, any new material must constitute a literary event. The slender corpus has gradually been squeezed outwards; but its expansion has mostly been made of *disjecta membra*: the torso of *Sanditon*, the *u-texts* and fragments, the improvisatory juvenilia. "Sir Charles Grandison" is at least a whole. The two inches of ivory have been reduced to two millimetres, but for once nothing is missing. Five acts of social comedy carved on a cherty stone: unity of time and action (if not place) observed, the entire miniaturized scenario specified with strict regard to Aristotle's rules.

So scaling down of size goes with scaling up of the literary happening. "The essence of the joke," remarks Brian Southam in his informative introduction, "is the reduction of a mammoth novel to a miniature play." And the comprehensiveness of the edition augments the joke. A *Nixon* text enters the public world, its private particularities aggrandized by the full scholarly apparatus. I have sometimes heard of an *Mad* in a nutshell, but here we are given Homer and his commentators, a ready-made Oxford Classical Text. Other books hover for generations on the margin of popular favour and critical acceptance. "Grandison" has leapt-frogged its way to canonical status without any intermediate stage. However explicit the circumstances, it is all, one must acknowledge, a little strange.

Jane Austen is one of that rare breed of artists who possess both talent and genius: the transcendence case is Mozart (whose, perhaps, a flaw in the dialectic of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*). It follows that her slightest offerings are likely to have some high intrinsic interest. "The History of England" and "Love and Friendship" are indeed gorgeous things, and *The Watsons* has more than derived significance. But we encounter these in a volume labelled *Minor Works*, or else in a contrived collection—they are presented as the by-products of genius, and we learn how to recognize talent in such a place. It is less easy to keep discriminations of this sort alive in the act of reading when we are confronted with the present volume, with the slender text so light by imputed importance.

The question naturally arises, wouldn't it be more in keeping to wait for the de luxe edition? This will be printed in a typeface of the period, on hand-made paper, and bound in marble boards. According to the prospectus, it will be accompanied by a reproduction of the complete original manuscript, in three-colour facsimile. The simultaneous appearance of this prospectus with the edition under review is rather as if the *Dunedin* Variorum should have announced that forgeries by T. J. Wives were to the course of production, or that the film rights had been sold. The reading process seems not to be finished when you have got through the text: the total experience involves further replications of the material in other modes. The trouble is that the existence of a superior version—however lovingly done—disinfects the reader of what might be termed the "reading" edition.

Finally, however, we are left with the twenty pages of text proper, and must make what we can of it. The question of

authorship can be disposed of without much ado. Family tradition had always ascribed the play to Anna Lefroy, the daughter of Jane's eldest brother James and his first wife Anne. Mr Southam makes a very convincing case for relegating Anna to the role of a scarcely comprehending childish assistant. She would have been no more than seven in 1800, when (according to the drift of the evidence) the play was complete. Family tradition can be as unreliable as any other brand of gossip, and hereditary rumours are indeed the most insidious. The editor's reasons for disputing the received story are set out with some care, and most readers will accept the case as overwhelmingly strong, if not absolutely conclusive.

The detailed evidence need not be set out here. It relates to such matters as watermarks, a snatch of contemporary song mentioned in the text, and physical features of the manuscript. It would need a greater expert than me to dispute with Southam over paleographic questions in this area. Admittedly, the distinction between an "early" handwriting, described as "much less formed" and "less mature", and a later hand, seems to rest on subjective factors. Scholarly inquiry is littered with the mistakes of amateur graphologists, who over-confidently assign age and sex on the length of ascenders, the placing of *i* dots or the roundness of loops. But this issue is a subsidiary one. The main point in question is the identity of the author, and even though—minor addenda to Jane's works notwithstanding—it seems hard to take away from Anna Lefroy one of her few claims to renown, the onus of proof now certainly lies with her proponents.

More awkward is the matter of literary merit. Southam candidly admits, "We are certainly not dealing with the vintage Jane Austen." "Grandison" is amusing enough and highly performable, but no masterpiece, not even a minor masterpiece. All that is true, and it must be added that even by the highest standards of Jane Austen's juvenilia "Grandison" makes a muffled impact. The editor would put this down to the degree of authorial dependence on Richardson. He writes, "Clearly, Jane Austen enjoyed herself in devising a style of allusive counterpoint that calls for nothing less than a verbatim knowledge of *Grandison*." The expression "allusive counterpoint" may be dressing things up a little, but of the constant flow of reference towards the *u-text* there can be no doubt.

Richardson supplied Jane Austen with one title—"Love and Friendship"—and with a trove of comic offerings for the early works. There are fewer direct allusions in the later books, and only a couple in the letters. It is conceivable that his immense volumes occupied a less prominent place in her imagination in her mature years. Not only are they novels of *longue haleine*, they require a fair amount of leisure if one is to read and re-read them, a luxury increasingly denied to Jane Austen and now available only to those who are, willingly or not, out of full-time employment. It is even the case that specialist eighteenth-century scholars tend to have only a dim recollection of the details of *Grandison*, and the publication of "Grandison" will promote some salutary in-service training. There is the least excuse for us all, because Jocelyn Harris's edition in three volumes (Oxford English Novels, 1972) is by far the best which any eighteenth-century novel has ever received anywhere. At present this prize scholarly bloom wastes much of its sweetness on the desert air of neglect, and a fortuitous result of the new publication may be to make people realize just how the major uncollected novelists should be edited.

But our business is books, not editions, and here the problems of intention and influence are fascinating. Southam provides a useful register of direct allusions to the narrative of *Grandison*. Most of them relate to the first and last volumes, for Jane Austen has no truck with Clementina (except in a brief off-stage reference), and so the cast list is uncluttered by Italians. The episodes dramatized concern Harriet's abduction by Sir Hargrave Pelfrence near the start; her rescue by Grandison; and then her marriage and that of Charlotte Grandison. The abduction also occurs off-stage, but then so it does in the novel, with Reeves giving Solby conflicting accounts of it; Harriet's last words had mentioned the

pretty fellows she expected to "slay" in her masquerade costume as an Arabian princess; Jane Austen does not introduce Harriet at all, until the scene of her forced marriage with Sir Hargrave. (It may be that certain features of the dramatic management have to do with the casting exigencies at Steventon: that these existed may be deduced from the parts later handed round *Lovers' Vows*.) There is a splendid moment of high comedy, without licence from the novel, when Harriet flings the prayer-book into the fire as soon as a clergyman intones the first syllables of the wedding service. It would be too easy to read into this gesture a rejection of patriarchal marriage, but there is certainly a sort of admirable hoiden in this Harriet's make-up at which her original creator would have blushed.

The most striking connection between novel and play occurs in respect of language. Southam worries about the deficiencies of Jane Austen's dramatic utterance, and suggests that "the very commonplaceness and banality of the dialogue could be part of the joke." This remark needs opening up a little. One of Richardson's aims in *Grandison* was to make use of familiar expressions and homely allusion: as Jocelyn Harris puts it, "Quotations, references, and ideas in *Grandison* are almost always drawn from popular culture, so that there was nothing to frighten away the less educated reader." Echoes are set up by such things as Sir Rowland Meredith's use of the old proverb; "Happy's the wooling that is not long a-doin'." This is mimicked in the play, where natural speech and sententious maxims are always on the point of colliding ("Come, Caroline, make haste, or the fit will be off.")

Indeed, there are moments when the model seems not to be Richardson but, a generation earlier, Swift's *Polite Conversation*. Extracts such as the following would be plausibly assigned to Swift by a good candidate for any dating paper:

MISS G. Oh! for shame, Caroline, I thought you knew better than to tell tales. Lord L... will you have any more tea?

Or again this:
LADY L. But Charlotte, where is Miss Byron?

MISS G. Very safe in her own room. I always send her away when she naps. LADY L. Poor creature! I hope she does not nap too often. But, seriously, Charlotte, is she worse or better?

MISS G. Law! Lady L., you are so afraid I shall not take care of her. Why, she is just as she always is—languid at three o'clock.

"Gapers" here just means "yawns." And finally, from Mr. Solby, "Adieu! we shall have a double marriage, as sure as two and two make four."

This mocking vulgarity calls into question Jane Austen's entire relation to her predecessor. Southam argues that she writes "to deflate *Grandison*'s epic proportions and the elaboration and leisureliness of its procedure." He also thinks that "the play is a shrewd and amusing sly at the character of Richardson's 'happy man' (Sir Charles)". I am not sure that deflation or swipes are quite what is going on. The play might rather be seen as mock-Richardson, in the sense of mock-epic: that is, with Richardson as its instrument rather than its target. It would have been easy for Jane Austen to make much more of the hero's pomposity and improbably sustained virtue if that had been her prime object. In the event, he has a comparatively small role in the drama, and we might fairly conclude that Jane (knowing of the existing abridgements and parodies) was simply trying to produce an ultra-condensed version, in the way that people try to squeeze more bodies into a mini-car. The tone of the proceedings is not exactly that of parody; it is more like an agreeable *divertissement*, attempting to remind the participants of as many favourite events as possible in the shortest space. The joke is to show up the absurdities to which even a grand narrative may be reduced—but without damaging the original. In the end, the play serves to demonstrate the need for Richardson to go on as long as he did. Epic proportions, leisureliness and all the rest are not threatened by a twenty-minute playlet.

It is a playlet, too, with all the *Barley-and-bijou* connotations the word might carry. The almost redundant efficiency of the edition shows us that when Jane Austen chose to be slight, slight is what she was.



James Grant Raymond (1771-1817) in the title role of *Kozeubue's The Stranger*, or *Misanthropy and Repentance*, at the Lyceum in 1810. The picture comes from the *Mansfield Collection of Theatrical Paintings*, now permanently on show at the National Theatre (Commentary, March 6). August von Kozeubue, a German dramatist more popular in his day than Schiller, wrote over 200 pieces and was performed throughout Europe. *The Stranger* was first played in London at Drury Lane, with John Philip Kemble in the title role and Sarah Siddons as the erring wife with whom he is finally reunited in an emotional scene involving the children. Many actors played the part, among them George Frederick Cooke in new life of whom will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS, and the play stayed in the London repertoire throughout the nineteenth century. Another of Kozeubue's romantic dramas of desertion and reconciliation, *Das Kind der Liebe*, was adapted by Elizabeth Inchbald as *Lovers' Vows*, the play immortalized by Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*.

Freedom's forms

By David Trotter

PETER MALEKIN:
Liberty and Love
English Literature and Society 1640-88
219pp. Hutchinson. £10. (paperback, £4.50).
0 09 143040 2

To call a book about English literature and society from 1640 to 1688 *Liberty and Love* is perhaps to hint at a particular abundance of those qualities during the period. It remains, however, a hint, the book itself is more soberly concerned with attitudes to the political constitution and the family.

Peter Malekin has written for "the energetic and intelligent general reader rather than specialist reader", and it must be admitted that his choice of material is unadventurous. He gives little sense of the breadth and variety of views expressed about his two main themes. Even the selection of major works seems questionable. *Pilgrims' Progress*, for example, has been excluded because it does not "relate" to those themes. Yet a devotional work

which inspired later generations of radicals must surely tell us something about the connection between spiritual and political liberty; and a story which opens with a man choosing salvation rather than his wife and children must surely tell us something about attitudes to family life.

This would not matter if the analysis of the works selected were penetrating. That it often isn't can be seen by comparing Malekin's account of Marvell's "Horatian Ode" with that provided by R.I.V. Hodge. In his book *Forethought Time*, Hodge clarifies the tensions within the poem by a careful handling of the implications of genre, possible audience and a tracing in logic. This is the kind of historical knowledge which Malekin promises to deploy, but rarely does—with the result that his reading of the "Horatian Ode" seems cautious and flat. "Marvell," he concludes, "is coming to terms with things"; and the general reader whose energy and intelligence have not been exhausted by this hypothesis will find little to encourage him in the bibliography, where the only item listed is John Wallace's *Destiny His Choice*.

Malekin's topic is an interesting and important one, for the general and the specialist reader alike. Both deserve something more incisive than he provides.

In exasperation

By Daniel Johnson

WOLFGANG FIETKAU:
Schwärmerei aus 1848: Ein Rückblick aus dem Louvre; Baudelaire, Marx, Proudhon und Victor Hugo
471pp. Rowohlt. DM22.
3 499 25106 X

This is a very original book, but its originality is of a dangerous kind. Its skeleton is an exegesis of a single poem from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, "Le Cygne", which involves the assistance of the most fashionable German gurus of left and right—Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt; Brecht, Hegel and Stefan George. But though much has been omitted to make way for disquisitions on Freud, Proust, the Young Hegelians and the history of the Louvre, and one would like to know more about the sinister influences upon Baudelaire, such as the Mafire, which the author adduces to explain left-wing disdain for this devoted admirer of Proudhon (whose ill-treatment by Marx was a further reason for suspicion of Baudelaire), in general readers of this erudite *Jeu d'esprit* will be borne along by the thrill of the chase.

The chase always returns to the insecurity of post-1968 West Germany,

even the punks, apparently, have something in common with Baudelaire. The book is not just about Baudelaire's swansong—it is a swansong, one which incorporates its own critique: "That the glorification of the vanished is no alternative to disillusion with what came afterwards—this quiescence... offers itself in all its poverty and presumption as a corrective to sentimental reminiscence."

Whether Fietkau properly applies this criticism is another matter. "Le Cygne" is seen as the despairing but wistful epitaph of a man exiled. In his beloved and beleaguered city. The book's underlying key is minor, though overlaid by the brilliant, brittle and impure style, characteristic of Berlin academics; there are a great many unnecessary English and Latin phrases, and even where these seem justified they are sometimes garbled.

Nietzsche described Parisian literary society under the Second Empire as being pervaded by "exasperated pessimism, cynicism, nihilism, alternating with plenty of wantonness and good humour... One must be more critical: at bottom they are all lacking in what matters—'la force'." Fietkau accepts this view, and he knows why *la force* is lacking in his own ego too, 1968 has left no swansong to see beside Baudelaire's; only this excellent Alexandrian scholasticism of sentimentality.

Fall of a stand-up comic

By Russell Davies

ERIC MORECAMBE:
Mr Lonely
190pp. Eyre Methuen. £5.95.
0 413 48170 0.

Having admired for so long the many distinguished plays what little Eric Morecambe must now be more than eager to examine any literary effusion his reticent colleague may care to offer in his turn. Mr Morecambe is a man of wide experience. He's got a lovely wife as well. Tragically deprived of short fat hairy legs at an early age, he would be the first to admit that for some years the funniest thing about him was his BBC contract. But he nonetheless managed to struggle up the hill until, for a while, he disappeared off the top of the poster.

His singing voice is the envy of Des O'Connor the world over. And who has not cherished his sallies? (There's no answer to that.) Often in pain from a rare allergy to tropical khaki shorts—the wire hoops sewn into these garments to prevent them touching his knees are much prized by collectors—he appears by permission of doctors who are by no means well themselves. Philosophically, he has moved far from the position of avid materialism adopted by his partner, and is now possibly the leading representative of positivist-empiricist thinking on the variety stage. His famous reply to a question, I believe, of Popper's, "What would you say to a little drink?"—"Hello, little drink!" said Morecambe, a twist of lemon distorting his handsome features—may smack a little of paternalism; but then as Morecambe himself has remarked, what's a little paternalistic smack? They cannot touch you for it.

Typically, his narrative work *Mr Lonely* stands quite outside the tradition of comedians' novels begun by Thomas Hardy, and you may have to stand outside the bookshop to buy it. It is an episodic account of the career of a comedian, Sid Lewis, who adopts the persona of "Mr Lonely" one gala night in East Finchley, has his talent spotted, and, after a medical check, shoots to national fame on television. The nature of the appeal Mr Lonely adds to what Sid Lewis had all along retained cunningly obscure, even in a photograph where Mr Lonely appears,

looking sociable, in top hat, black tie and tails. What Sid and Mr Lonely certainly do share, apart from the lack of a white tie, is the heroic knack of getting seduced after work. No sooner than they come off-stage or camera, than girls called Bobbers and Serina are pressing him/them to the carpet. It doesn't seem too bad a life, even in East Finchley, and Sid's unloveliness on the morning after makes a change from pathos.

Technically, the novel takes a small but agreeable risk by introducing Mr Morecambe himself as the first-person narrator of a flashback in Chapter Six. A reminder that he is present within the texture of the narrative is perhaps superfluous, however, as his humour leans quite visibly in the direction of Morecambe already: "She was singing something from *Madame Butterfly*. She was terrible and looked old enough to remember Madame Butterfly as a caterpillar." A certain number of opinions are implied, too, which are thought to be not unconsent with Mr Morecambe's own. Reputations are forked over here and there. Harry Secombe receives a tribute ("If you don't like Harry, you don't like people"); but as early as page 19, an agent is wrestling over the phone, with an impossible singer called Shirley ("It's the way I tell 'em" has to leave the party, "helped out by a couple of friends"; there is a certain amount of barbed talk: "We've got Yarwood on

the third of September. 'He's great.' 'I only hope that while he's here Heath and Wilson stay alive...'). If only Mr Morecambe had sited the clown in the north, he could have called this chapter *Malice in Sunderland*. But this side of the novel—what might be called its *roman à dressing-room-clef* aspect—does lend space to those portions of the story where Serina and Bobbers are away on legitimate carpet-pressing assignments with their husbands-to-be.

Sid, in the end, is thrown away: not hoist by his own petard so much as pierced by his own award, after a showbiz prizegiving. But he had seemed to enjoy fame only in a grim sort of way, so it was perhaps no great loss. It is a disappointment that Mr Morecambe does not, in preceding struggle; but then the fact that he was driven to write a novel at all perhaps suggested, all along, that fame is not as interesting as it ought to be. If he returns to the form—and propelled as I sense he is by otherwise unventilated anger, he may well do so—I would suggest he lays off mothers-in-law (too traditional a target); unattractive women (scorning ugliness is the most medieval remaining function of the comic trade); and coloured people, about whom he and Sid are uncomfortably equivocal ("Some of these blacks do a good job"). There are still plenty of areas left in the comedy profession to explore. One would welcome, for example, Morecambe's backstage view of charity performances, or "actress gratias", as they were called by Gide.

Alienation effects

By Peter Mackridge

ANTONIS SAMARAKIS:
The Passport
Translated by Gavin Betts
112pp. Cheshire, Australia: Longman.
0 582 686911

Antonis Samarakis is one of the best-known fiction writers in Greece today. His novel *The Flaw* has been published in an English translation and has been made into a film in France. He writes of sensitive individuals alienated in a modern urban society in which state control and manip-

ulation is the norm and in which the individual conscience is suppressed. Because of Samarakis's desire to be universal (and because to him totalitarianism is the great enemy, irrespective of whether it emanates from the Left or the Right), many of his novels and stories take place in unnamed locations, and the characters, too, are often nameless. This means that although his plots are skilfully contrived the lack of specific background to the characters, and their own lack of individual traits, makes for an abstractness which, paradoxically, comes to dehumanize his undoubtedly humanistic message.

Literature is not made with good intentions alone. Samarakis is to be admired for his emphasis on the individual conscience revolting against conformity and injustice, and on the attempt to make contact with fellow human beings despite the inhibiting conventions of society. But, as some of the stories in *The Passport* (written during the 1960s and 1970s) demonstrate, the ideas and convictions of the author and his characters are often no more than stated explicitly: they are stripped of any convincing psychological detail and human emotion. Samarakis freely handles such terms as "The Absurd" and "The Bomb" which have ready-made connotations before they enter his writing; he adds little to them. Also, one feels that he constructs his narrative situations on ground that has already been amply covered by Kafka, Sartre and Camus, and in 1984 and *Brave New World*; he breaks little new ground himself.

In some of the stories of *The Passport*, however, Samarakis does transcend his usual limitations. The most successful story is "The Last Participation", and it is perhaps a hopeful sign that it seems to be the most recent of the pieces collected here. It is written in the first person; whereas the more typical third person of Samarakis's narrative tends to distance the characters too much, here we have the central character participating not only in the action but in its recording. The first person also gives Samarakis an opportunity to work a most effective trick on the reader. The story is about the funeral of a man whose son has been arrested by the Security Police for his participation in the student demonstration against the Colonels' regime. The young man arrives late and under guard, and immediately becomes the centre of attention, so much so that a relative hands him a red rose intended for the deceased. Only towards the end of the piece do we learn that the story is being narrated by the man whose funeral it is he is gratified that the young Dimitris is being honoured instead of himself, for Dimitris represents hope for a future of peace and liberty. In this piece the details of time and place, and the family setting, create a profound effect; and some of the author's hackneyed pieces about the faceless "little man"

Devilish devices

By T. O. Treadwell

MICHAEL EDWARDS:
The Man from the Other Shore
186pp. Hamish Hamilton. £6.95.
0 241 10615 X

The Man from the Other Shore tells the story of Zedzed, born of Greek parents in Turkish Asia Minor, he uses his gifts of quick-wittedness and an absolute freedom from scruples to become a millionaire in dealer and one of the most powerful men in the world, and dies, old and full of ours, literally laughing. The story is told in the third person by a narrator who obscures himself very frequently into the text, most often to suggest to the reader an appropriate response to the passage before him.

At its best, this technique creates an attractively self-effacing comedy. We are told, for example, that Zedzed belongs to a group of free-enterprising (Constantinople) firm men who earn a living by setting business premises alight and then demanding a bribe before they will extinguish the ensuing conflagration. The scene is set in April 1865 in the context of a major contemporary event, Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox, but the potential pretentiousness of this is neatly punctured by the narrator's intrusion:

Generals Lee and Grant and a Constantinople fireman? No, there's no fancy symbolism; you know the sort of thing—war is arson, somebody starts it, somebody puts it out. Nothing like that.

As the novel progresses, these interventions become increasingly frequent. Appearances of biography proper are introduced, including lengthy extracts from the report of a special committee of the US Senate in which politicians prominent at the time address themselves to the matter of the arms trade. Zedzed has dealings with a wide range of historical figures,

from Lloyd George and Clemenceau to the keeper of the male *Bordello de l'Amor* to the Rie de l'Arcaide, who will be familiar to readers of George Painter's biography of Primit. Zedzed is, in other words, a major actor in the drama of his time, and confirms what the reader may have suspected, that *The Man from the Other Shore* is a fantasia on the life of Sir Basil Zaharoff (1849-1936).

In this afterword, Michael Edwards refers to his book as a "fiction" (surely it is time to prohibit this emetic term). André Gide's dictum that "Fiction is history which has taken place, and he goes on to say that he takes this to mean that "real" life is an intricate mixture of fact and fiction. Though it is difficult to see how this conclusion follows from Gide's remark, it is certainly true that history is the imposition of order on the chaos of collective past experience and is therefore inevitably an artifice. But the order imposed on Zaharoff's life and thus by Mr Edwards is the order not of historical methodology but of romance, and *The Man from the Other Shore* remains firmly within the ranks of fiction.

Michael Edwards is concerned that he share his horror at the vast wealth made by selling instruments of death. He Zedzed (the name is well-chosen; Zaharoff's middle initial was Z and "Zedzed" has sinisterly apocalyptic overtones) is the very devil, but this confirms Edwards with the moralist's old and intrinsic problem—the devil is devilishly glamorous. This problem remains unsolved. *The Man from the Other Shore* is funniest when Zedzed is at his most subtle, bringing a government here, starting a minor war there. When Michael Edwards stands back to explain how wicked all this is we can admire his principles and congratulate ourselves for sharing them, but the energy of the novel half drains away.

Daily doings

By Craig Brown

KETH COLQUHOUN:
Goebbels and Gladys
186pp. John Murray. £6.95.
0 7195 3787 8

The archetypal journalist is slumped over a bar or typewriter. It doesn't matter which, his collar unbuckled, the knot of his tie drifting steadily down towards his paunch, a weary scowl on his face, a mountain of stub growing in the nether, the latest cigarette, nearly half of it frail ash, balancing upright, the dim torch of his lip waiting to be relayed to the next in the packet. Many visitors to Fleet Street are surprised to find themselves surrounded by journalists living up to this archetype, but on reflection it is less surprising: the journalist's mind is an amalgam of cliché and fantasy, the cliché having grown from time spent flitting news into one of a small choice of moulds, the fantasy from a conviction that words, if only better chosen, and arranged, could enable their author to lead an independent, country-cottage type existence.

Keth Colquhoun, himself a journalist, is so alert to the absurdities of Fleet Street that any journalist reading *Goebbels and Gladys* will feel a touch of paranoia, as if Colquhoun had been listening in with his tape recorder. So many of the details are accurate, the rumours of folding beds in the women's department, the manic enthusiasm for snappy headlines, the solid, drunken gentlemanly journalists who are encouraged to do nothing, the sudden discoveries of forgotten cuttings files, the pushy, clean-cut executives who always achieve their ambitions. Colquhoun's report of a new editorial idea of dynamic journalism is particularly good.

"Rationalism," he repeated, "or rationalism. Perhaps we should take an early decision about which word we will use, and I believe that word will go for the shorter one, rationalism." It is the most important issue in the world today, and no one

will touch it. We are going to remedy that.

"We are going to tackle it responsibly and directly. We are going to drive this taboo subject out into the open, and get it talked about, and get us talked about... What is it? It is the dislike of white for black and black for white. Not merely dislike, hatred. That is a strong word, and we are going to use strong words. I don't want to use copy words like misunderstandings and mutual respect..."

But Colquhoun and his narrator, Keth Verity, take such an understated delight in the minutiae of Fleet Street that they forget they are not simply writing a personal diary. Thus, lengthy descriptions of restaurants and menus, bus journeys and aeroplane flights are included, it seems, for no reason other than that Colquhoun happened to be feeling peckish or restless at the time. Colquhoun's pursuit of social accuracy and amusement also undermines the main plan of his book. The rather distant and plan of his ending—Verity says "Job, says Gladys—appears to be tagged on in embarrassment: it is the country cottage writer's penance for the glutinous enjoyment of describing the details and compromises of the street of shame. In the end one is left wishing that Colquhoun had not tugged so close to Verity. "Occasionally friends have asked me whether I was writing a novel or not, and I have sometimes said 'one, sometimes the other' and that the novelist had looked, watched coldly from the conductor's box the curious sight of so many journalists dancing with themselves.

The Sky Above Hell (160pp. Now York: Tappan, £7.95 0 8008 7236 3) is a collection of stories by Yuri Mamleyev, translated by H. W. Tjalsma. Mamleyev is a Soviet writer, now living in the United States, and the Russia of his stories is (according to the publishers) "a moral world of random murder, occultism, chaos, boredom and madness." His fiction is in the tradition of "fantastic realism" established by Gogol and Dostoevsky.

Escaping into flux

By Julie Kavanagh

MARILYNNE ROBINSON:
Housekeeping
219pp. Faber. £5.25.
0 571 11713 9

At the beginning of Marilynne Robinson's outstanding first novel, set in a far-western town by a glacial lake, domesticity is endowed with an almost spiritual aura. After the death of their father (the train he was on plunged into the lake), his three adolescent daughters leave like infants to their mother, who encloses them with a kind of elemental warmth. The stability of their home is palpable: the girls sleep on starched sheets under layers of quilts, their mother makes cakes and apple sauce on rainy days and in summer mixes a pot-pourri of brown rose petals and spices. But the novel sets out to subvert this kind of tranquillity, exposing it as illusory, and housekeeping subsequently becomes a genre of despair.

Years later, when Helen, one of the daughters, returns home to Fingerbone to commit suicide by driving her car into the lake, her mother tries to restore order in the lives of the two children Helen leaves behind by adhering to household routine. "She whitened shoes and braided hair and turned back bedclothes as if re-enacting the commonplace would make it merely commonplace again." The factuality of domesticity is further emphasised in her dreams. Once she sees a baby falling from an aeroplane and tries to catch it in her apron, and once she tries to fish a baby out of a well with a tea-strainer. The jittery maiden great-aunts who housekeep for Ruth and Lucille when their grandmother dies likewise take refuge in habit and familiarity as a way of dealing with a crisis. But their veneration of routine, of the need to make each day a replica of the next, is not to be reconciled with the vicissitudes of growing children ("Lucille and I perpetually threatened to cough or grow out our shoes"). The aunts flee back to their basement room in a residential hotel, leaving Sylvie, Helen's vagrant sister to take over guardianship of the girls.

Housekeeping to Sylvie means a merging of love and squalor: she collects opened tins and newspapers, allows leeches, swallows, mice and thirteen cats the run of the house (attuning it to the natural world outside), and involuntarily convulses in the sisters' truncheons from school by providing solemn notes which affirm their sham symptoms. This good-natured eccentricity, however, has far more significance than is at first apparent. The acquiescent velvetness of her slippers, Sylvie buys as school shoes for the girls represent not just her liking of beautiful gawwags, but, spoiling as they instantly do on the muddy walk to school, are emblems of the novel's main theme: an acceptance of transience, an acceptance which Sylvie embodies: "To her, the deteriorations of things were always a fresh surprise." Lucille's growing desire to conform to the lives of ordinary people is expressed in her rejection of these slippers: she pulls the soles off and demands red rubber boots: "Lucille saw in everything its potential for invidious change... Ruffles wilted, sequins fell."

Ruth and Lucille often come home after a day's truce in the woods to find Sylvie sitting—and sometimes eating—in the dark. The habit not only exemplifies Sylvie's nonconformity, but is integral to the novel's thematic whole. Darkness on the one hand conveniently veils the dirt and clutter that Sylvie ignores, but it is also a kind of anodyne for her. (The reason, Ruth says, why she gives the word "evening" three syllables.) Then, again, darkness is given a mystical relevance. In an account of skating at night on the lake which echoes *The Prelude*, Ruth senses a presence "too close" and stepping nearer. And one night, after seeking light on the shore with Lucille, she falls into a kind of trance during which it becomes clear to her that darkness can be a "solvent" to the flux of life "if only the darkness could be perfect and permanent." Finally, all this is put in an oblique Christian context when, towards the end of the novel, an allusion to Christ's death is followed by a reference to the childhood of John, who returns one back to the lake, saying, "The darkness was a kind of religious experience; that the darkness was then, as in Eliot's paradox, in *The Four Quartets*, 'the darkness of God'."

Rather as Eliot did in his poem, Ms Robinson incorporates seemingly mundane incidents and images in an overall metaphysical design. References to wild strawberries, dead leaves, reflections in a lighted window (associated with Ruth's memory of her dead mother and grandmother) recur more and more frequently. The novel implies that memory and loss can paradoxically be a reminder of an eternal reunion to come: "The first event is known to have been an expulsion, and the last is hoped to be a reconciliation, and return. So memory pulls us forward." Seen in these terms, mourning becomes something positive. At the end of *Housekeeping*, the Christian myth becomes more explicitly linked to legends attached to Fingerbone: a reference to God walking on the water reminds us of the local faith-healer who died trying to do the same; the flooding of Fingerbone Lake and the lives it consumes are made analogous to the biblical Flood; Ruth's vision of eternity as a garden with "all of us as one child" assimilates the book's several references to strange packs of spectral children.

Though there is a vein of Christian faith running through this novel, it is not overt or over-schematic. Sylvie's transcendence can be taken as allegorical, but at the same time she is an original, fully developed character in her own right. The growing rift between the sisters is also marvellously depicted, in a way that is both poignant and comic. It reaches its peak during an incident in which they come to physical blows: Ruth has found various flowers pressed and preserved in her grandfather's dictionary under corresponding letters of the alphabet. Lucille shakes them out and crushes them—a gesture, like that of pulling the sequins off her slippers, that emphasizes her rejection of the household's unorthodox tenets. While Ruth, like Sylvie, clearly now feels, "the life of perished things" and knows that "what perished need not be lost", Lucille demands a solid home and predictable adolescent requirements like new jeans and nail polish. She goes to live with one of her schoolteachers, leaving Ruth and Sylvie to keep house in their own wayward fashion. When the tranquil understanding that now exists between them is threatened by meddling neighbours, who rightly assume that Sylvie is imposing her vagrancy on the girl, aunt and niece decide that rather than be separated, with Ruth committed into care, they should escape together, into a life of transience. They burn the house at night and cross the vast railway bridge that spans Fingerbone Lake.

The previously realistic narrative now begins to mirror the drifters' new freedom and to take the form of arcane, meandering reflections. That the pair have symbolically transcended the mundane by crossing the bridge is reiterated by a free-at times, inaccessible—prose style. The flux which *Housekeeping* appears to endorse is also emphasized throughout by an abundance of similes, which contrive a sense of continual change and assist a dissolution of the actual. Ms Robinson will often use two or three similes at a time, and this, as well as the serpentine movement of her sentences, reflects the novel's themes of dematerialization and itinerancy: "Downstairs the flood bumped and fumbled like a blind man in a strange house, but outside it hissed and trickled like the pressure of water against your eardrums, and like the sounds you hear in the moment before you faint." There is also in *Housekeeping* an aesthetic relish of words for their own sake, facilitated by Ms Robinson's exceptional command of language. Like Seamus Heaney in his essay "Mossbawn", she has the gift of evoking childhood through a graphic record of visual and tactile sensations. And like Nabokov in *Invitation of a Bearded Man*, she achieves a lyrical colouring of everyday objects that is in itself a kind of poetry.

To call *Housekeeping* a novel is possibly to traduce it, also thematically and stylistically it offers itself as a long prose poem (that the magazine *Quarto* printed an extract from a chapter as a poem called "Loss" would seem to confirm this status). It is a complex work, and as such should be read slowly and carefully, but this is not to suggest that it is impenetrable or over-suggestive. The author's control of plot, her intense eye for eccentricity, her clarity, quiet humour and delicate touch; invest the book with a lightness that successfully counterbalances the density of thought.

Terser and terser

By Eric Korn

PETER TINNISWOOD:
Shemereida
157pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £5.95.
0 340 22718 4

Peter Tinniswood is an eloquent, Manchester-raised, Scouse eccentric whose novels of idiosyncratic North-of-England domesticity—especially *A Touch of Daniel* and *I Didn't Know You Cared*—struck a seam of tenderly coarse humour for humorously coarse tenderness, or, just, that won him—rightly—admiration and a television series.

His last novel, *The Sirk of Sirk*, was uncharacteristic: a Robin Hood romp that went a-camping in Sherwood Forest and exploited, and was disfigured by, Tinniswood's new pet, the short blunt sentence. His new novel, *Shemereida*, is a style hybridized of Brautigan, Finkbein and Daisy Ashford. In the seven years since, while its discoverer has been busy with stage and broadcasting, his creature has festered. In *Shemereida*, or, to give it, just this once, its full title, *Shemereida by the incredibly beautiful H.H. Washbrook as told to Peter Tinniswood*, brevity is carried to unheard-of lengths: already this very sentence contains more syntax, by an appreciable margin, than the entire novella.

Such a style has its virtues.

It lets the action move with apparent swiftness. And the pages be turned. Fast. As for example:

He nods.
He giggles.
He speaks.

(Just like Frank Richards. Who wrote "Ouch" on one line. And "Yarrow" on the next. And "Cheese it, you duffers" on the one after. But he was paid by the line.) This terseness also underlines the vigour and originality of Tinniswood's choice of words:

"The meadows sodden with duck". Or "Past drunk-lested steps. Past paddy-whacked bar. Past onf and liar. Past runt and cripple." His animal noises are particularly impressive. The yarl of a bobcat. The zirrup zirrup of the telephone. The sinner of the hem of her Bruges lace skirt. There are also authorial interventions. These are in italics. They often consist of rhetorical questions. Which are answered rhetorically.

What? For chrissakes, dear reader, dun't keep saying what. It's driving me bananas. Am I going to recount the plot?

Scarcely. Shemereida is incredibly beautiful and astoundingly rich. She moves in an atmosphere of exotic birds, rich foodstuffs, and upmarket consumer durables. She dresses exquisitely. And often. There is a seemingly complaisant husband. And lovers. And mysterious, menacing messages. The plot thickens. Nipples harden. There is Mirakol, of whom she sighs: "I need your pluck in the fig-fresh gape that flickers". Is there more to him than pumping thighs and buck of back? Is Laverne Van Strijden as permissive as she seems? And what of the corpse of Rogan Shieff? And why do all these names seem misspelled? The action accelerates. The shadow of E.J. Thrillb lies heavy. Does this style have a drawback? Several. Though the book is short, it outlasts the joke. It wastes paper. And the author's talents. The last chapter reads.

Yes. Yes. What an incredibly beautiful ending. I hope I haven't given anything away.

Strangers under the trees

By Mark Abley

SEAN VIRGO:
White Lies and Other Fictions
150pp. Hamish Hamilton. £6.95.
0 241 10546 3

"With the whispering rattle of seeds on a drum they were taking the old man home." The final story of *White Lies* takes place in a hospital in British Columbia, where a silent old Indian lies dying. He is, like most of Sean Virgo's characters, out of place; previous stories have centred on a tropical island drift in Paris, a German in a Canadian logging camp, a Québécois soldier stationed by the Pacific, and an English soldier in Malaysia. Virgo's people are observant of physical detail, they respond sharply to messages from their senses; but the rich settings highlight an emotional isolation. For the old man, gradually confronting death, "home" does not mean the Indian houses where his relatives want to take him; "home" is the unknown land of spirit-birds and ancestors, which the man learns to find less alien than his chaotic life. It's one of the many impressive qualities of Virgo's fiction that, when his characters belong elsewhere, he can evoke with equal authority their location and their state of mind.

Most of the stories in *White Lies* set boys or men against nature of the man's stands very much in the North American tradition of fiction, though his specific influences (Golding, Cary, Lawrence, Graves) are English. More remarkably, he captures with rare exactness the rhythms and vocabulary of both Old and New World speech. Born in Malta, he was educated in England and has lived on both coasts of Canada. His characters tend to hold themselves aloof from the temporary groups in which they find themselves—the schools, armies, camps and hospitals that make them painfully conscious of their twin desires for solitude and communion. The revelation achieved by Raoul Forestier, the Québécois soldier, is characteristic: "Not just that he is a stranger under the trees, but that he has failed to condense himself into one simple being." That simplicity and wholeness remain at odds with Raoul's sexual energy, a quality Virgo evokes, here and elsewhere, with vividness and tact. The women in these stories are observed keenly, yet with little sustained effort to portray their inner lives. Although he would probably have no sympathy for *machismo*, Virgo's is a masculine world.

Out of ten stories, only one falls flat: the one written in the first person. It's a revealing failure, for the need to create a credible narrator deprives that tale of an interior, spiritual richness, giving it

instead a coolness that rings false. Virgo's strengths (his ability to move between outer and inner worlds, his blend of intuition and observation) bear little relation to irony. Implicit in his fiction is a reverence before both the miracle of consciousness and the miracles of nature. As his stories flow from surroundings to reactions, from dreams to events, his characters maintain their inborn dignity. A privacy lingers as though every story has its secret details that the author chooses not to betray.

One would expect a young writer who has already published four volumes of poetry to display a gift for language; one might not expect him to subordinate language, as Virgo rigorously does, to the demands of action and character. His plots are dramatic, occasionally melodramatic, for these are tales of arson, war, hunting, suicide; death is a constant presence. Yet the violent deeds work out an inner destiny. Removed from their origins, his characters can fall back on nothing but themselves. The title-story is especially fine; it tells of an orphaned Indian boy consigned to a distant boarding-school, and of the well-meaning white people who unwittingly hasten his revenge. Forceful yet understated, it rises to an ending that, once read, seems incapable: the sure mark of a talented artist.

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In and out of the abyss

By J.I.M. Stewart

LEON EDEL EDITOR:
Henry James Letters
Volume III (1883-1895)
579pp. Macmillan. £17.50.
0 333 18046 1

Je ne suis point à Paris — je suis dans un coin perdu de l'Angleterre occupé de la chose du monde la moins vraisemblable: la "première" d'une pièce en quatre actes, qui se trame ici ce soir. "Je fais du Théâtre" — je suis tombé bien bas — priez pour moi... Comme vous pensez bien, c'est la soif de l'or qui me pousse dans cette voie déshonorante.

The date of this letter is January 3, 1891: the coin perdu is Southport; in a few hours Edward Compton and his repertory company will be presenting to an English audience the dramatic version of *The American* with which Henry James has provided them. And the budding dramatist, now in middle age and full of misgivings, thus expresses his agitation to his young French friend Urbain Alençon. On the following day he sends a telegram to his sister-in-law, Alice James, in America:

Unqualified triumphant magnificent success universal congratulations great ovation for author great future for play Compton radiant and his acting admirable writing Henry

The euphoria here is a little contrived, for James has a habit — essentially defensive in intent — of imparting to every expression of feeling a touch of excess which asks us not to take him too seriously. That James Russell Lowell may lose his post as American Ambassador to the Court of St James's, he writes, tears from his eyes; his "heart swells and almost breaks again" when this actually happens. His pen is bewildered and doesn't know where to turn, so onerous is the burden of his correspondence.

He "trembles on the verge" of approaching Mr A.P. Watt, a literary agent. He cares "literally" for nothing but R.L. Stevenson's return to England; he follows the exile's wanderings "with an aching vision"; it comes over him "with horror and shame" that he may "stand face to face with you branded with the almost blood-guilt of my long silence".

But the genuineness of this *soif de l'or*, although frequently expressed with a similar routine extravagance, is not to be doubted. We have known for a long time now — and chiefly as a result of Professor Edel's scarcely interrupted labours — the surprising fact that James, moving among the affluent both in England and on the Continent, was often uncommonly hard up. His books didn't sell (in 1884 he had to remind Frederick Macmillan that £2-17-6 was the balance owing to him for a year's sale of some seven or eight of them); the periodicals were increasingly inhospitable; it blushed to own it, but I am in want of money; I am now turning up frequently in both his business and his personal correspondence. Alluring, therefore, was the bright prospect of large pecuniary gain that the stage seemed to exhibit. He feels himself, "without exaggeration," capable of writing successful comedy "of a serious kind".

Here, then, is the road that led James to Southport, and to his son's rewriting the last act of *The American* so as to provide it with a happy ending, and thereby "basely gratify" country audiences, and "British thick-wittedness" in general. That the road grew stonier and stonier as he trudged on is the unhappy fact documented in the latter part of the present volume. James is exhibited as being in considerable confusion of mind. On the one hand we find the reiterated assertion that the conditions of the English stage are so revolting that "one would be impardonable for going to meet them if one's inspiration were not exclusively mercenary". From this source flows an increasing stream of disenchantment with English society at large; the upper class is "rotten and collapsible" as the French aristocracy before the revolution, and the populace is coarse and brutal beyond belief. On the other hand is a persuasion which James desperately tries to nourish in himself to the effect that he is really framed to be a dramatist even though he feels everything about the Theatre to be detestable. To Stevenson — to whom more than to anybody else he writes seriously on the writer's craft — he declares (only a month after the Comptons have begun trucking *The American*, already much educated, round the

provinces): "I feel as if I had at last found my form — my real one — that for which pale fiction is an ineffectual substitute."

Fortunately, if horribly, this nonsense about himself and about the Novel was blown into Limbo when Guy Domville was damned (if only by the many-headed vulgar) at the St James's Theatre on January 5, 1895. But "bruised, sickened, disgusted" though he was by the "cruel ordeal" of that first-night reception of what he called, not unjustly, his "delicate, picturesque, extremely human and extremely artistic little play", and (not so justly) "altogether the best thing" he had achieved, he seems in the light of his correspondence to have come up fighting more quickly than has sometimes been supposed. Only four days after the near-fiasco he writes to his brother William of a "simple freedom of mind" which should enable him to return to his own "legitimate form", there to find "a divine solace for everything". He has learnt that "deep and dark is the abyss of the theatre", but it is an abyss which he has plumbed, so that now he is ready to move on. It will not be quite unaccompanied by some trailing shreds of illusion. "In the air," he tells William, is a sense that his position is much more "distinguished" in consequence of *Guy Domville* than it was before. To commend this slightly nebulous attribute (regularly set within its inverted commas) is great good fortune in Henry James's world. But to be heroic is something better. And there is simple heroism in what he writes to his fellow-novelist William Dean Howells still before the end of this ghastly month of January. His "book-ponies" is what counts — "and I mean to do far better work than ever I have done before."

Throughout the twelve years covered by this selection from his letters, James's centre of gravity continues, although precariously at times, to be in London. His ideally arranged existence, he says, would be five months there, five months in Italy (mainly Rome), a month in Paris, and "a month for the *imprévu*". London is ceasing to strike him as so very "distinguished"; it means too much dining out and too many time-consuming invitations to country-house week-ends. At its worst, the city becomes "a big black inferno of fog, mud, drunkenness and pauperism". But the English upper class, even if rotten and collapsible, has not lost its fascination. In one of his long gossiping letters to Grace Norton he mentions that evening's dinner-engagement, from which he plans to come back at ten o'clock, in time to go to a kind of nocturnal garden-party at

The mould-runner's story

By Paul Bailey

CHARLES SHAW:
When I was a Child
Introduction by John Burnette
159pp. Cullinan Books. £4.50.
0 904573 427

Charles Shaw's extraordinary autobiography originated in a series of unsigned articles published in the *Staffordshire Sentinel* in the early 1890s. A decade passed before *When I was a Child* appeared under the anonymous "An Old Potter". Although its author died in 1906 in poverty, it is safe to assume that he was happy at the end of his long life. His book is notable for its optimistic tone, its confidence in the new century as one in which the horrors he endured throughout his childhood would never recur.

Shaw was born in 1832, in Tunstall in the Potteries. He received his education, in reading and knitting, from old Betty W., a local widow who maintained a school within the walls of her humble cottage. By the time he was seven, he could read the Bible and knit his own stockings. Thanks to Betty's grooming, he was able to approach works of literature when he studied them for a few hours in the few hours he was spared from his day's work. Shaw's study was a small room, containing a desk, two bookshelves, and a small iron stove, all purchased out of his meagre savings. "I don't know what it was," he writes seriously on the writer's craft — he declares (only a month after the Comptons have begun trucking *The American*, already much educated, round the

Lady Ardilaun's, tomorrow I go out to Osterley, to Lady Jersey's — a beautiful old Georgian house, of which the internal decoration, remarkably homogeneous (turns, garlands, festoons, trophies etc.) is celebrated and makes it a kind of model of its class.

And the following week he will go down to Highclere, Lord Carnarvon's where he expects to be a good deal bored by "very amiable and very respectable society".

About much of this we already know from Professor Edel's copious and absorbing biography. And we already know, from the same authority, a good deal about Constance Fenimore Woolson, the expatriate American gentlewoman turned popular novelist, with whom James established in Florence in 1880 a friendship terminated only by her suicide in Venice in 1894. To this desperately devoted admirer — for she was certainly that — James was undeviatingly attentive and gracious, although in a rather wary way. They met, he reports to Howells, "at discreet intervals", and the relationship imposes upon him, he seems to him, the not particularly entrancing duty of reading her books. Her middle name celebrated the fact that she was a grandniece of James Fenimore Cooper, and although it is improbable that he ever addressed her as other than Miss Woolson, it is regularly as Fenimore that he refers to her in his correspondence with others. There is a very faint flavour of mockery about this, "our good Fenimore". (In a letter to Stevenson in 1892, not included in the present selection, there is a reference to "the good little Thomas Hardy", who has published in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a novel "chock-full of faults and falsity".) James and Miss Woolson appear to have agreed to destroy each other's letters, but Professor Edel has come upon four of Miss Woolson's (three of them being very long) catalogued with the William James correspondence. They are of considerable interest, and are printed for the first time in an appendix to this volume.

Miss Woolson is intelligent, vastly amusing, and capable at times of sharp mockery. James has declared out of her letters to be full of "amiable elements" and she pounces on this, saying she doesn't think a letter could be described in a more depressing way. She understands that James has no wish to know "the little literary women", but it is fortunate that she isn't even that, but really "a sort of... of adoring aunt". It is in this character, one supposes, that she wishes him a "sweet young American wife". In his



A chalk drawing (1901) of Laurence Binyon by William Strang from an exhibition of his work that opened at the National Portrait Gallery last Friday. The exhibition will close on June 28.

novels he doesn't make it sufficiently evident that his heroes are in love with the heroines — and why doesn't he give us a woman for whom we can feel a real love? The fourth letter ends:

The lagoon, the Piazzetta, and the little still canals all send their love to you. They wish you were here. And so do I. I could go by in a gondola, you know, and see you on Mrs B's balcony. That would be... something. Good bye.

It is clear that James had a tricky situation on his hands, and improbable that Miss Woolson, who found undraped statues difficult, understood the nature of what Professor Edel calls homoerotic love. James must have recognised the pain that his disparaging estimate of Fenimore, and his suspicion that she was acute enough to be aware of it. He had been guilty of failure in relationship — and that, to him, was a very terrible thing.

never acknowledged his indebtedness to me mention two. When the young Shaw finally released from the workshop, he goes happily off to Sunday school, where the boys move away from him. He is in the class — in awful isolation — because he is wearing workshop clothes. His entire makes do not want to be talked. The other passage describes his first awareness of the ill-effects of the dog him. He is walking in Woodcock Gardens, one beautiful Good Friday, at the age of seven, and on errand for the plate-maker.

It was in 1799 that Lord Elgin set out as ambassador to Constantinople, determined to bring back casts, drawings and specimens of Greek antiquities to accelerate "the progress of taste in England". The "allegiance" object from the Acropolis, he wrote, "is a jewel". His marbles began to arrive in London in 1803. Four years later they went on show. The fashionable world flocked to see these fragments of old Greece, displayed in a "damp, dirty porthouse" near the top of Piccadilly. Later they were moved to the courtyard of Burlington House. Later still they went to the British Museum. John Flaxman took one look and renounced the "Venus de Medici" for ever, comparing with the "Theus" he told W. R. Hamilton the "Apollo Belvedere" was a more dancing marble. His own master Canova, the greatest sculptor in Europe, refused point blank to consider restoration: it would be sacrilege for any man to touch them with a chisel. "The naked figures", he told Elgin, "are real flesh, in its native beauty." Benjamin West called them "sublime" and wished he was forty years younger. Prize-fighters posed by them. Mr Siddons, when Benjamin Robert Haydon was moved to ecstasy: "That combination of nature and idea, which I felt yearning to display to midday conviction, yet heart-brokenly I had seen nothing else I had been able to keep me in nature for the rest of my life. I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon

I heard the birds with a quiet respect flooding my soul, and an indelible gladness pervading my whole nature. There came the dawning sense of a relationship to other and higher and things I had never before felt. Yet I had no repining, and never thought it a hardship to go back to mould-running and the stifling atmosphere of the hot stove. But while there, I saw a youth walking among the garden paths reading a book. As it was Good Friday, and the father's grocer shop was shut up for the day, I supposed he had the leisure to do as he pleased. Now, I had acquired a strong passion for reading, and the sight of that youth reading at his own free will, forced upon my mind a sense of painful contrast between his position and mine. I felt a sudden, strange sense of wretchedness... what birds and sunshine, in contrast with my work had failed to impress upon me, the sight of that reading youth accompanied with still bitterness. I went back to my mould-running and hot stove with my first angust in my heart.

I must have got over it, however, in time," he adds. "It is rare for youth to nurse melancholy." He had the hours of darkness, after all, he had a candle, and he found the books.

The canon of the classical

By J. Mordaunt Crook

FRANCIS HASKELL and NICHOLAS PENNY:
Taste and the Antique
375pp. Yale University Press. £20.
0 300 02641 2

On July 20, 1798 a triumphal procession entered Paris. It was the fourth anniversary of the Fall of Robespierre. There were songs, and speeches, and martial music. But the heroes and heroines of the procession were neither warriors nor statesmen nor royalty. They were the gods and goddesses of the ancient world, immortalized in bronze and marble, treasured and venerated for more than two thousand years. For this was the Triumph of the Antique. From Napoleon himself the word had gone forth: bring back the art of Italy. And here, before the crowds in the Champ de Mars, in wagon after wagon rolled the relics of Imperial Rome, packaged to make a Parisian holiday. The "Apollo Belvedere" was there, and the "Laocöon"; the "Dying Gladiator", the "Belvedere Torso" and the "Spinario". "Brutus" was there too, and "Cleopatra", and "Cupid and Psyche". There was the "Marble Faun" and "Meleager"; the "Belvedere Antinous", the "Cesi Juno", the "Capitoline Antinous" and even—triumph of triumph, preceded by caged lions and followed by dromedaries—the four bronze Horses of St Mark's. One or two trophies were missing—the "Venus de Medici", the "Tiber", the "Nile" and the "Pallas of Volturno" arrived later—but here, paraded as the spoils of war, were the icons of Western civilization.

Or so it seemed. These treasures of the ancient world had once supplied the dynamic of the Renaissance. For centuries they had been the very touchstones of taste. But that Napoleonic Triumph marked the zenith of their fame. Their authenticity was already being questioned by scholars; Mengs and Winckelmann had pointed the way. And within a few years their reputation had been virtually eclipsed by the fame of the Elgin Marbles.

Taste and the Antique sets out to chart this chapter in the history of taste. Its theme is "The Lure of Classical Sculpture" between 1800 and 1900; "the creation, the diffusion and the eventual dissolution of a 'canon' of universally admired antique statues." In other words, the subject of the book is the rising and declining reputation of a specific group of Greco-Roman sculptures over a period of four centuries. It traces their rise and fall, but it ducks the issue of their decline. The catalogue is superb. The bibliography is admirable. The illustrations are lavish—there is even a glorious Panini on the dust jacket. But the explanatory chapters are far too brief. The nineteenth century section, in particular the shift in taste from Roman to Greek, remains curiously thin.

It was in 1799 that Lord Elgin set out as ambassador to Constantinople, determined to bring back casts, drawings and specimens of Greek antiquities to accelerate "the progress of taste in England". The "allegiance" object from the Acropolis, he wrote, "is a jewel". His marbles began to arrive in London in 1803. Four years later they went on show. The fashionable world flocked to see these fragments of old Greece, displayed in a "damp, dirty porthouse" near the top of Piccadilly. Later they were moved to the courtyard of Burlington House. Later still they went to the British Museum. John Flaxman took one look and renounced the "Venus de Medici" for ever, comparing with the "Theus" he told W. R. Hamilton the "Apollo Belvedere" was a more dancing marble. His own master Canova, the greatest sculptor in Europe, refused point blank to consider restoration: it would be sacrilege for any man to touch them with a chisel. "The naked figures", he told Elgin, "are real flesh, in its native beauty." Benjamin West called them "sublime" and wished he was forty years younger. Prize-fighters posed by them. Mr Siddons, when Benjamin Robert Haydon was moved to ecstasy: "That combination of nature and idea, which I felt yearning to display to midday conviction, yet heart-brokenly I had seen nothing else I had been able to keep me in nature for the rest of my life. I felt as if a divine truth had blazed inwardly upon

my mind and I knew that they would at last restore the rest of Europe from its slumber in the darkness." His companion, Henry Fuseli, the Swiss master of the Sublime, was overwhelmed: "he strode about saying 'De Greeks were godes! de Greeks were godes!'"

That well-known episode is worth repeating. For not everybody agreed at first. The "Venus de Medici" still had her admirers. The artists were on Elgin's side. Chantrey, Lawrence, Westmacott, Rossi and Nolletts all supported him. It was the connoisseurs who cast doubt on the value of the marbles. Trained in the appreciation of Ideal Forms, they rejected the naturalism of the Parthenon marbles; collectors of Roman and Graeco-Roman figures, they spurned the simplified sculpture of the Greeks. They preferred the "Apollo Belvedere" to the "Theus", grace to grandeur. Their leader was Richard Payne Knight—himself a collector of Graeco-Roman bronzes—strongly supported by William Wilkins and "Athenian" Aberdeen. Before the marbles had even been unpacked, Payne Knight called across to Lord Elgin at a dinner in 1806: "You have lost your labour, my Lord Elgin, your marbles are overrated; they are not Greek; they are Roman of the time of Hadrian." That Hadrianic tag was an error dating back to Dr Jacob Spon. Soon it hung like an albatross round Payne Knight's neck. Later he changed the ground of his attack, from chronology to quality. But the damage had been done. Not until 1816—partly on the testimony of foreign experts like Visconti and Canova—did the English government belatedly agree to purchase the marbles for the nation, largely to prevent their going abroad. Haydon noted in his diary: "This year the Elgin Marbles were bought and produced an Aera in public feeling." Next year he introduced "Theus" to John Keats.

Elgin emerged from the affair bankrupt and broken. But he had helped to initiate a radical transformation in European taste. Hazlitt, for one, rejoiced: the presence of the Elgin Marbles in London, he predicted, will "lift the Fine Arts out of the limbo of vanity and affectation, in which they have lain sprawling and fluttering, gasping for breath, wasting away, rapid and abortive". So much for the "Antinous". Here, certainly, was a cultural watershed, the seeds of a second Renaissance. The first Renaissance had sprung from the rediscovery of ancient Rome, the second stemmed from the rediscovery of ancient Greece. In 1815 the Louvre had to surrender the "Venus de Medici". But in 1821 it acquired the "Venus de Milo".

Meanwhile, those gods and goddesses in the Vatican and the Uffizi had been replicated all over Europe. And here—in trading the cult of antique (or re-antique) marbles during the course of the eighteenth century—Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny really come into their own. Their footnotes are scattered with allusions.

James Adam chose the "Apollino" as one of the statues for the dining room at Syon; its pose seemed "the most agreeable attitude that could be confined in the niche". There was already a miniature version on a chimney-piece in Spencer House, and there was soon to be a full-sized copy in Thomas Hope's gallery at Deepdene. At Holkham Hall, Norfolk, the limbo of vanity and affectation, in which they have lain sprawling and fluttering, gasping for breath, wasting away, rapid and abortive. So much for the "Antinous". Here, certainly, was a cultural watershed, the seeds of a second Renaissance. The first Renaissance had sprung from the rediscovery of ancient Rome, the second stemmed from the rediscovery of ancient Greece. In 1815 the Louvre had to surrender the "Venus de Medici". But in 1821 it acquired the "Venus de Milo".

There is one Marcurius another at Kenwood; another at Chiswick; and yet another at "The Wild Boar" at Chatsworth; another at Ormsdon Park, York-

shire; and another in the Derby Arboretum. The "Capitoline Faun" appears in marble at Wentworth Woodhouse; in plaster at Holkham and Croome. There are versions on a chimney-piece at Saltram, Devon, and—much decayed—on the attic of the Philharmonic Hall, Islington. Even the gurgantuan "Nile" reappears in miniature form on the pedestal of Thomas Banks's Westcott monument at St Paul's.

The "Medici Vase" and the "Borghese Vase" appear together in bronze at Osterley and in alabaster at Houghton. There are no less than sixteen marble copies of the "Medici Vase" at Woburn and many more, in cast iron, at Alton Towers, Staffordshire. Bartolini's version in the orangery at Chatsworth also does duty as a lamp-standard. "Meleager" adorns the skyline at Lyme Park in Cheshire; and reappears again in Robert Adam's great hall at Kedleston. Bronze versions of "Silenus with the Infant Bacchus" can be found inside the sculpture gallery at Petworth; outside the sculpture gallery at Woburn; and—most effectively—in Valadier's version in the ante-room at Syon. The "Dying Gladiator" reappears in stone (by Scheemakers) at Rousham; in marble (by Verriery) at Wilton; and—most memorably—in bronze, by Valadier, in the great hall at Syon. Scheemakers made a stone copy of the "Lion Attacking a Horse" for Rousham. Nolletts made marble copies of "Castor and Pollux" for Shugborough Park, Staffordshire, where they joined casts of the "Furietti Centaurs". In London those same centaurs flanked a cast of the "Medici Vase" in the staircase vestibule of the Royal Academy. The "Farnese Capitives" were compressed "into a chimney-piece at Northumberland House. Ryshwick made a copy of the "Farnese Flora" for the Pantheon at Stourhead. Wyon even turned her into a symbol for an agricultural prize medal. "Cael Juvos" supplied the model for Sir Joshua Reynolds's Fortitude in the window he designed for New College Chapel, Oxford. The "Marte Ceres" turned up in marble at Chatsworth, and in biscuit in the Fitzwilliam Museum. Poor Ceres, in fact, often did duty as a gas-lamp in Victorian London.

And so the parchment goes on. The much-restored "Zingara" slippers today on a chimney-piece at Powderham; she slippers too in the library ante-room at Stourhead. And the "Dancing Faun" still dances; in bronze at Blenheim; in marble at Wentworth Woodhouse. The "Wrestlers" still writhe in the landscape at Studley Royal. In the entrance hall of the Athenaeum, Diane de Gabies' still greets arriving members; the "Apollo Belvedere" still guards the staircase; and, outside, the "Pallas of Volturno" (gilded in recent times, and presented with a new stand sentinel over the entrance to clubland's academy). Not all the replicas, of course, were equally austere. The "Hermaphrodite" appears today, only as ever on its gilded bed; in marble at Petworth; in bronze at West Wycombe Park, where its pudenda doubtless amused the Hell Fire Club. Rather more cheaply "Cleopatra" continues to gaze out across the lake from her shady grotto at Stourhead. "Cupid and Psyche" are still entwined at Cobham in Kent, and at Ickworth in Suffolk. "Marcus Aurelius" rides again on Chambers's triumphal arch at Deepdene. At Holkham Hall, Norfolk, the limbo of vanity and affectation, in which they have lain sprawling and fluttering, gasping for breath, wasting away, rapid and abortive. So much for the "Antinous". Here, certainly, was a cultural watershed, the seeds of a second Renaissance. The first Renaissance had sprung from the rediscovery of ancient Rome, the second stemmed from the rediscovery of ancient Greece. In 1815 the Louvre had to surrender the "Venus de Medici". But in 1821 it acquired the "Venus de Milo".

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Even after the eclipse of Rome by Greece, such echoes of the Vatican and the Uffizi continued to reverberate in the halls of our great museums. Bassei planned to include versions of the "Celestial Venus", the "Dying Gladiator", "Cleopatra" and "Camillus" in the entrance hall of the Fitzwilliam. In the early 1930s Alexander and Buecheler on the Schinkel placed them on the skyline of his Altes Museum in Berlin. Smoke even hoped to install copies of "The Wrestlers" and the "Laocöon" on the steps of the British Museum. But as the nineteenth century progressed, the image of ancient Rome began to wither. The taste of the Romantics was first Greek, then Medieval. And this shift in taste, this devaluing of Rome and all its symbols, is an aspect of cultural history which has yet

to be properly explained. The development of Ruskin's attitudes, for instance, might supply a clue.

When the young Ruskin—trained on a diet of casts and copies—first visited Rome and Florence in 1840, he could hardly avoid being impressed by "the extraordinary differences between the usual casts and copies of the *Laocöon* and the *Apollo*... and the originals

... Instead of coming to the *Belvedere*, as to a known hackneyed form I started at it as if I had never seen it in my life. And the *Venus*, usually in her casts a foolish little schoolgirl, is one of the purest and most elevated incarnations of womanhood conceivable". In 1843 Ruskin still respected the "Apollo Belvedere" as a representation of ideal truth. But by 1846 he had come to consider that same *Apollo* hopelessly "unsplendid". By then he much preferred "the calmness of the *Elgin Theus*" to "the convulsions of the *Laocöon*". Indeed the "Laocöon" seemed "a subject ill-chosen, meanly conceived, and unnaturally treated, recommended to imitation by subtleties of execution and accumulation of technical knowledge". In fact, "no group has exercised so pernicious an influence on art as this". By 1856 Ruskin could tell Charles Eliot Norton that the "Apollo Belvedere" was "a public nuisance". By 1886 the "Venus de Medici" had dwindled into "an uninteresting little person"; and as for "The *Arotino*—that wonderful coluber—it seemed not only a 'nuisance' but irredeemably 'vulgar'". In fact in 1880 it required something of an effort for Ruskin to recall that the Tribune in the Uffizi—"not the size of a railway waiting-room"—had "actually for the last century determined the taste of the European public in two arts".

The canon of classical taste had turned out to be a mirage. Even so, Ruskin never lost sight of the value of authority in art; the necessity for the existence of some yardstick of excellence, some aesthetic absolute by which to measure contemporary creation. "Respect for the ancients", he had written in 1842, "is the salvation of art, though it sometimes blinds us to its ends. It increases the power of the painter, though it diminishes his liberty; and if it be sometimes an incubator to the essays of invention, it is often a protection from the consequences of audacity. The whole system and discipline of art, the collector's results of the experience of ages, might, but for the fixed authority of antiquity, be swept away by the rage of fashion, or left in the glare of novelty; and the knowledge which has taken centuries to accumulate, the principles which mighty minds had arrived at only in dying, might be overturned by the frenzy of a faction, and abandoned in the insolence of an hour."

That was well said. But during Ruskin's own lifetime, the industrial process had gone far to undermine the tangible authority of the antique. From marble, carved by hand, to lead, plaster and terra-cotta; and thence, from electrolyte to porcelain and papier mâché: replication had become multiplication. Antique sculpture had slipped, and slipped badly, from the salon to the suburb. The cult of the antique, the prestige of Renaissance art, had always depended, at least in part, on scarcity and inaccessibility. When the touchstones were turned into clichés, the dons of Brasenose College Oxford destroyed a copy of "Cain and Abel" by Giamologna which had graced their quadrangle since 1727. Walter Pater, then college Fellow in Classics, seems to have raised no objection.

E. Arntzen and R. Rainwater's *Guide to the Literature of Art History* (635pp. The Art Book Company, 91 Great Russell Street, London WC1E 6AS, 0 905309 05 7) is a bibliography compiled for the purposes of reference and research. It was developed from *Chamberlin's Guide to Art Reference Books* and is double the length of its predecessor, containing as well as the reference material, the most important works in each of the arts arranged by period and region. It is divided into four sections: General Reference Sources — Bibliographies, Directories, Encyclopaedias and Iconographies; Sources and Materials for the Study of Art History — Primary Sources, Histories and Handbooks; The Individual Arts — Books and other works of Reference and Serials.

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By Hugo Williams

Brothers and Sisters
Cinecitta and ICA Cinemas

"What annoys me about English society is that, take the Lady Diana/Prince Charles thing, if that's still allowed, if that's a norm of values that the aristocracy and upper middle class have and if they are taken as being alright, they do permeate down. And then you get aspirations coming back up... Richard Woolley on his new film *Brothers and Sisters*, the most expensive production ever to be funded by the British Film Institute and the first to get a West End release. "It was of primary importance to me that it put its message across. I wanted to get as wide an audience as possible and so I simplified the structure." He simplified the structure all right. The film reminded me of one of those big wire-and-paper lampshades: a yard of political ephemera wrapped round a visible commercial framework.

It's about two brothers, both upper-class bastards but in different ways. David, the wet, lives in a commune with Patricia and works hard at being a worried social worker. He says things like "We're trying to work out a new code of sexual behaviour", pretends that *Penhouse* is part of his research and casually leaks his infidelities to Patricia. He is visited by his brother James, a blimpish major in the army. "What's that list of birds by the phone?" asks James, who envies David's access to "free love". "All available are they?" "No they aren't", snaps David. "It's a telephone tree in case there's trouble at the refuge." Incredibly, they go for a drink together. The major recognizes a local prostitute and leaves in a hurry. Later that night she is murdered and we are asked to wonder which brother killed her.

My first reaction was to assume that her foul-mouthed client had done it, but we are never told one way or another. (The film has a highly questionable slogan: "One man killed her. All men are guilty.") The does the murdered woman rent a room next to the commune, but her sister happens to be nannying to the major's children and has been sleeping with his brother at weekends. The sisters thus form a sexual spy-ring linking the brothers' worlds and providing both of them with a (not very good) motive. As a jurymen I wouldn't have been convinced by the case against either of them. These motives, I would have argued, are purely theoretical and exist only in the mind of counsel-for-the-prosecution Richard Woolley.

What happens next is what the thriller aspect of the film depends upon for thrills, so a cut-up method is used to illustrate the narrative by withholding selected facts. We are taken forward two weeks so that caricature weekend at the major's country seat can be struffed with politically-significant flashbacks to the night of the crime. The nanny overhears an argument between the brothers and learns for the first time about David's girlfriend Patricia. "You're two of a kind, you brothers," she points out to him, "but at least James is an honest bastard." As the weekend proceeds, we are used to outrage by the major's callous approach to wife, horse and child, and the social worker's suddenly self-righteous attitude to the mourning nanny. Every sneer from the brothers receives a guilt-mongering shot of the fatal weekend, which, by the end of the weekend, is looking like one of the most wretched in the history of "film" (Mr Woolley is someone for whom the word "film" is never in the plural), even for a liar. Instead of getting a move-on when his night's work is over, he spends hours hanging about in a two-lamp park where cats screech, tramps loom and fractious pinkie congregate, as if thousands of pounds depended on her looking scared enough. I kept wanting to say, "Look, don't hang around on my behalf; dear," but she went right on wandering about looking behind bushes for her ditzy assailant as if to say, "Where are you then? You're late." I was no less impatient. This was a thriller conceived along the lines of the London Dungeon: it's cold and dark and confused. It's not to be exciting, I have news for it.



Donald Morgan: "Drying" - a recent watercolour from the current exhibition Women Washing, from Degas to the Laundrette at the Francis Kyle Gallery, 9 Maddox St. W1.

Confessional

By Tom Phillips

The Triumph of Death
Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Somewhere near the heart of darkness we watch a tribe that venerates its mother and the sun, struggling through a compressed wedge of time which contains within two generations the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Reformation and the Theatre of Cruelty. The archetypes are seen through the imaginations of their archetype-setters: we see not just Joan, but Dreyer's Joan with Artaud hovering over her after his spirit has dominated all the previous action.

One hardly needs to name the writer: this could only be a play by David Rudkin, that volunteer, Marys of the British theatre whose admirers have a hard time of it as they witness, in successive plays, each wound of the dramatist's exposed. Who else would want to leave an image of himself upon the stage as a bare forked animal, and with his head a riven Ireland from whose splintered mouth is forced, "Yes, thou shalt not!" Yet his audiences are rewarded by the finest language to be heard in the theatre today, and glimpses of a drama yet to come from Rudkin, of high wit, passion and lucidity.

Alas, not quite yet. *The Triumph of Death*, for all its frequent poignancies and

Shipwrecked

By N. S. Thompson

The Large Bronzes of Rice
Archaeological Museum, Florence

Archaeological finds are not usually synonymous with the discovery of major art works, but - although they have as yet been little publicized and discussed - with the large bronze warriors (both over six feet tall) found in shallow water off Rice, Calabria, in the toe of Italy, which is the case. They were found in the Ionian Sea by a skindiver in August, 1972, and restored in Reggio Calabria and in Florence at the Soprintendenza Archeologica, where five years' intensive cleaning and taking place on both the internal and external surfaces.

What have come to light under centuries of marine encrustation are two standing male warriors, naked, and - but for the loss of shield and spear - in near perfect condition. One has hair bound by the waves

grandeur, is too smothered in its imagery of excrement to let in or emit much light.

The best of Rudkin's work has had its bleak fury tempered by humour. Both *Afore Night Come* and *Ashe* were very funny plays, and *Cries from Casement* (perhaps his best) achieved a perfect balance of what is almost too apposite to call the grave and the gay. *The Sons of Light*, with its low risibility, suffered from having no element in the action which stood outside it to mediate with the audience. Now *The Triumph of Death* (risibility) devours itself before our eyes. Two scholastic monks promise early on to hold a door open on a work that desperately needs the counterpoint of their commentary, but they disappear only too soon.

The production, by Peter Furgate, is a formidable piece of team-work with especially strong performances from Paula Dowie as the Mother and Veronica Roberts as Jehin (Joan). The Christ figure, too reminiscent perhaps of *The Life of Brian*, is the only serious piece of misanthropic imagination, and lighting help to point up many of the play's allusions and homages (Rudkin has usually made too little use of the stage's possibilities for visual statement). "Dark must strike somewhere", says a character towards the end of the first half. Indeed it floods this work, and, though it is a powerful evening's theatre, it is more for the stubborn than the casual playgoer.

athletic's *maenias*, the other appears to have worn a helmet, now lost, and both are immediately recognizable as being in the tradition of Greek fifth-century bronze statues. Naturally, the problem of provenance will occupy scholars for some time to come. But some authorities, such as Werner Fuchs and Antonio Giuliano, are speculating that the statues were created by Phidias, who presided over the decorative bas-relief marbles of the Parthenon and, though famous for his statues in gold and ivory, is known to have worked in bronze. It was Phidias, indeed, who was given the commission of three bronze statues offered by the Athenians after the Marathon victory to the sanctuary at Delphi, of which none is known to remain. Could these be two of them?

But how did they come to be in the Ionian Sea? Perhaps they were being sold to a Roman dealer, part of a looted Roman antiquities trade, or were simply looted and founded on their journey to Ostia. But as yet we have no record of Ostia's important movement, though fragments of wood and pottery recovered from the site

Real

By Robert Hewison

Heartland
Various cinemas

Heartland is a completely authentic film about farming life in Wyoming in 1910, shot in Montana. Based on the memoirs of Elinore Pruitt Stewart, it is an account of the first year or so she spent at a remote upland ranch at Burnt Fork, where, a widow with a seven-year-old daughter, she arrives from Denver City to become the housekeeper of the solitary and taciturn widower, Clyde Stewart.

The director, Richard Pearce, was *Heartland* as a demythologizing Western: there is not a covered wagon or a Red Indian in sight, and the only time a cowboy uses a gun is to kill a pig. Instead, the emphasis is on the reality of the landscape, and on hard work. Elinore falls in love with the high summer pastures, but Grandma Landauer, the German immigrant neighbour who rides like a man and ranches like a woman, warns her of the winter and of her own husband who froze to death. Grandma Landauer's is just about the only conversation Elinore gets, for Widower Stewart has said little more than to ask her how many hens are laying and what she paid for the seed potatoes.

Undeterred, Elinore stakes a claim to the vacant plot next to her employer's land, and prepares to go in for house-keeping on her own account. Stewart becomes quite talkative, and tells her that she will never make it on her own. It appears that he is asking her to marry him, and she accepts. At this point there is a welcome change of mood, for the two turn out to like each other, and as winter closes in a baby is on the way.

The winter, as predicted, is harsh: their one cowboy has left because there is not enough money to pay his wages; Elinore is encumbered by her pregnancy; there is not enough feed for the cattle; the creek freezes over. The baby is born without help during a blizzard, and later dies. As spring comes they face ruin, but Elinore bursts out: "I have a child buried in this land!" and the cycle of work and birth and death resumes.

The film was funded by the American National Endowment for the Humanities, and a sense of worthiness permeates it. There is every effort to discourage romance, but the city-dweller's fantasy of rural authenticity threatens to overlay the

collousness and pain. Efforts are made, too, to give the right period detail - the images of the dramatic landscape and the ranch house reach towards Wyeth or Norman Rockwell - but too often the result is National Geographic. The actors are excellent, Rip Torn as the Scottish widower, Conchita Ferrel as the hard working and unglamorous widow. But a film that strives to be truthful about life in the West is in danger of sacrificing the drama of realism for routine.

may give a clue as to the nature and nationality of the transportation. There was an ancient port near Rinos, which might help account for their presence in the area. There is a big surprise concerning the craftsmanship of the statues themselves. A fact only discovered in the first place by an ultrasonic probe and other, specially developed techniques is that the statues' eyes, eyelashes, lips and teeth were laminated with silver, most of which is now clearly visible. Complete with armour and other decoration, the statues must have been a spectacular sight.

As it is, their light Classic grace has captured the Florentines' hearts: the Archaeological Museum has received rooms of anonymous verses addressed to these "gods", and an army of art students, amateurs and professionals has been busily at work. Originally, they were only to have been on show over the recent Christmas period (before returning to their "native" Calabria), but they are being kept in Florence for the spring and summer.

Original sin

By Peter Conrad

La Traviata
Metropolitan Opera, New York and BBC TV

To placate Ileana Cotrubas, who sings Violetta, the Met has settled for a visually nondescript and dramatically tentative new *Traviata*. Cotrubas declined to work with John Dexter, because there seemed a danger that he might want to interpret the work; Dexter conceded defeat, and in his stead as director the Met engaged Colin Graham, from whom no analytic or interpretative complexity need be feared. Dexter - who at the Met has been responsible for a hieroglyphic *Aida* and a *Rigoletto* set on and around a festering tower of Babel - may misconceive Verdi, but at least he has a conception. Graham did little more than issue stage directions.

The performance, conducted by James Levine at his most hard-driven and rhythmically unrelenting, relies therefore on the dramatic initiatives of its singers. Cotrubas lacks the agility and amplitude of voice for the heroine. Her coloratura in the first act is frantic not ecstatic, and instead of a flooding benediction of sound in her renunciation of Alfredo she emits a plaintive whimper. She looks, as well, more a money Mini than a Parisian sophisticate. But she is cunning and sensitive enough to atone musically for these physical insufficiencies. Indeed she specializes on them by making Violetta vulnerable not brazen in the first scene. Too vulnerable, perhaps - would the case-hardened courtesan be so unexpectedly disabled, so instantly demoralized by sincere emotion, as Cotrubas is when she hears Alfredo's voice through the open window? In her renunciation, too, it's panic and despair not heroic selflessness which Cotrubas - movingly but questionably - emphasizes. Her collapse after Alfredo's insult is terrifying, as if the life had been suddenly shocked from her while she stood there, and her consumptive wasting is touchingly portrayed. But still she is closer to Mimì than to Violetta, unable to manage the grand, angelic impersonality of this Verdi heroine who, like all his sopranos, anticipates the maternal intercessor and redeemer in the *Requiem*.

With Germont père, too, played in this production by Cornell MacNeil, the really intriguing *Traviata* approaches the spiritual abstraction of the *Requiem*. His arrival at Fiora's party is dramatically improbable (the censorious patriarch can hardly have been invited to this licentious revel), and one of Colin Graham's good touches is the surprise of the other guests when he addresses Alfredo as his son) but symbolically just. He is the paternal equivalent of the heavenly voice which bailliffs the victims of the auto-da-fé in *Don Carlos*, hovering above the action to denounce Alfredo's piteousness and to offer a paternal pardon to Violetta. He's less a character than a conscience, just as Violetta's plight is less her specific sexual disgrace than the original sin from which we all petition to be relieved.

We regret to record the death of Q. D. Leavis on March 17. Almost fifty years after the publication of her influential *Pilgrimage* and the *Reading Public*, and her founding the *Journal Scrutiny* with her husband F. R. Leavis, she gave a lecture at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature on "The Englishness of the English Novel". The talk has now been published in the Spring 1981 issue of *New University Quarterly* (115 pp. Basil Blackwell, £4.25; ISSN 0307 8612).

As its title suggests, the lecture is characteristically Leavisian: indeed, rural provincialism - in the view of the conditions in which great novel-writing can occur, though referring to Camus's shift "from irresponsibility to full humanity" between *L'Étranger* and *La Peste*. In her search for novels which offer "radical and responsible enquiry" into the human condition, Leavis problems being recognized to be both moral and psychological. Mrs Leavis ranges with admirable assurance throughout the English tradition, though in the last year of her life she found nothing to praise in what was new.

commentary

Black and white

By Jeremy Treglown

Macbeth
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

At the beginning of a weekend in the course of which you could come in from the garden in Edgborough or Ampney Cravins, pour yourself a drink and, without taking off your wellingtons, switch on a TV performance of *Macbeth* coming live from the Met - if that doesn't represent progress, what does? - it seemed perverse to struggle through the traffic to Covent Garden, only to be taken back to the 1950s by John Napier's unwieldily portentous sets and costumes for *Macbeth*.

This is the black-and-white *Macbeth* show: black for Evil and Night (that is, for almost the entire opera), white for their opposites (Duncan's brief appearance,

done - it has become a cliché of production for Shakespeare. If not for Verdi - as an ecclesiastical procession). Straining your eyes, if you have any left after the white-hot reflecting mirror, you can make out a vast dark pyramidal set, made up of about fifty one-foot-high steps: a useful platform for the magnificent if over-crowded chorus, but otherwise a hindrance to the performers. It worked great destruction among the principals on the first night, hem-lines ripping and ankles twisting as they struggled up and down.

The chorus arrange themselves on these steps as required, tripping in and off whether as witches, soldiers, retainers, banqueters or refugees - it seems all same to them - and when they are there they sing wonderfully (the conductor is Riccardo Muti). What they are doing there other than singing, though, except in the well-conceived, genuinely horrifying apparitions scene, it would be hard to say. In the banquet, for example, they certainly aren't banquetting. Elijah Moshinsky's conception of the work is at its crudest here. The irony of the scene is exuberantly brought home by Verdi. His orchestra compels boisterously like a municipal band, Lady Macbeth and her guests sing for all they are worth about driving away dull care, death to grief, and so on, while all the time Macbeth is appallingly confronted with his nightmare of guilt. To play it, as Moshinsky has persuaded them to, as grimly as if everyone sees through Macbeth's eyes, is to deprive the scene both of this irony and of the change of mood as Macbeth's behaviour becomes unignorable.

Renato Brunon sees the hero, it is clear, as a man more wicked against than which, and gives a passively tormented performance well within his vocal range. This lays more on Renato Scotti as the Lady, and though she was cheered on by her first-night supporters as if she was running in the London Marathon, she did not come up to expectations. Her high notes are hard-edged, her dynamic range often seems constricted, and she waves her arms about like Shirley Bassey. What this she is miming? Getting something down from a high shelf? Beating off a rapist? Night and daggers, in fact, in that order. "Tu, notte, me avvolgi / di tenebra immota; / qual petto percoce / non vegga il pugnale..."

What with all this, and Macbeth's villainous eyes furiously roaming round the auditorium, it is good to see some real acting from Neil Shicoff as Macduff. During "Patric oppression" - a passage when the suppliant chorus benefit for once from being static - Shicoff twists and snivels really quite like someone whose children have just been murdered, and he sings "O figli, o figli miei!" with penetrating lucidity. This, at least, is a lot better than watching TV, even if it is in black and white.



A plaster copy of Joseph Durham's last monument to Leigh Hunt. The bust itself was removed from Kensal Green Cemetery some time in 1972, neatly cut from the top of the memorial stone. (The copy is in the vaults of the Kensington and Chelsea Public Library.) Efforts to trace the bust are being made by, among others, the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association, c/o Richard Russell (a descendant of Leigh Hunt's), Headmaster of St George's School, Windsor Castle, Berkshire SL4 1QF.

Body language

By Barbara Bray

La Cérénale
Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris

The Cherry Orchard, which was given its first realistic production by Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1904, is illuminated in all its timeless beauty by Peter Brook's rigorously non-realistic version in Paris. Chekhov always insisted that the writer must never judge, and in opposition to his early interpreters, saw his plays, especially this one, as predominantly comic. To both these aspects of their original, Brook's company are completely faithful. The loving and attentive impartiality with which the whole group of characters is created lets each actor delve to the roots of his part, a part at the same time absurd and tragic. By making every syllable of the text work, the actors produce a portrait gallery of man's paradoxes and contradictions. On the stage they become complete men and women, the peculiarities of their personalities and often divide them only serving to point up the humanity that makes them one. It is almost as if each

character possessed, in his or her own personal permutation, the whole range of human characteristics. Brook matches even the marginal characters to this conception: in the brilliantly staged Act 3, the Station Master, invited to make up the numbers at the party but seeing his recitation ignored, twirls his party but proudly off-scene in a walk of his own.

The Bouffes du Nord is a delapidated, unrestored, time-blackened shell of a traditional *vaudeville*, and in this production there is no stage as such and no curtain. The action takes place mostly in the main body of the auditorium, occasionally overflowing to the galleries and sides. There are no sets, and the only props are a screen or two and several aspects which, rolled up, do duty as table and chairs. This involves a good deal of athleticism, and the great gain is a balletic quality in the acting. Bodily movement, instead of being tamed and conventionalized by furniture, reflects mood and emotion. Perhaps the only fault in the staging is some lack of musicality in the sound of the cherry trees being cut down and of the wailing of the breaking harp strings.

French productions of foreign plays tend to be presented as "adaptations" even when they are merely straight translations. In this case, though there have been structural

modifications, Jean-Claude Carrière's text brings every line as close as possible to succinct modern French, without superfluous or anachronism. The language is stripped down so that, as in the original, every word and every silence carries weight. Natasha Parry as Ranevskaya, Michel Piccoli as Guev, and Niels Arestrup as Lopakhin lead a cast in which everyone brings his part to vivid life. You are made to feel that each individual happens only by chance to be in his own skin and situation, working out his destiny in terms of his fortuitous attributes. For example, one is surprised at first to see the pretentious valet Yasha played by the very short and swartly Maurice Bénichou, but the apparent oddity soon becomes a demonstration that we all have to play our parts, however unlikely, with such minds and bodies as we are born with.

Brook compares Chekhov's dramatic technique to the cutting of certain films, passing from one image or emotion to another before any one is expressed exhaustively. Brook's interpretation of *The Cherry Orchard* recalls, perhaps deliberately, the work of the Japanese Zen cineaste Yasujiro Ozu. No cultivated nostalgia, no sentimentality, instead, the almost commonplace is shown in such a way as to stir us to our depths.

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A Poem about Angels

You want to write a poem about angels.
Not because they are winged and white and haloed
And in many paintings very beautiful
But because you have seen many things and remembered
Only angels. You are certain for example
That you walked on famous streets,
Under towers, over rivers, around the parapets
Of ancient walls, medieval walls.

Once, you watched beeches turn to cypress
From a moving train, and every time you looked,
Another season. Surely, there were mountains
By the side of the road. You wrote it down.

Only the angels are intact, marble
Or otherwise, recorded, you imagine, before breakfast.
Maybe before dawn by some lucky visionary
With a paintbrush. You believed especially
The story of the man who fell asleep and woke
To find his Mary finished by the angels.
You would like to know those thorough angels
With names like Gabriel; the cherubim, the seraphim.

All you know is how impossible it is
Without them. The stones conspire against you
With the heavy clouds, and everything through glass
Or, worse, that crackling memory, flushing tents
And candles between the high pink turrets
Of what it is as if the slides you never took
Got all mixed up. Only occasional the empty screen
For you to fill with all your angels.

In the dim church, a darker patch of wall,
The handwork of angels. A face
More gentle than the finished circle
Of a moon altering your courtyard,
Unhanging buildings from their heavy stones.

The angels could help you with anything.
They could show you how to use a word like dream
Or I in the middle of a poem, pressing you
With secrets like their oldest friends.
Prophets, patriarchs and kings.

Still, they're busy with gardening
And God to deal with who is old
And must be disappointed. I suppose
The scenery gets dull, if you're
An angel. All that cloud and pearl.
There aren't chariots of fire
Every day, you know, and it's a long time
Between appearances in dreams.

One night, they are gathered on a cloud.
A moon, completed, rises, catches them off guard
And before they think that is another mouth
And I have done nothing, one cries, Gabriel.
Look Gabriel. And Gabriel, transformed,
Puts down his harp, which has been playing
Only mechanically for the last two weeks,
And hums a long-dreamed psalm.

Jacqueline Osherow

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RKP

Thin is beautiful

By Carol Rumens

SHEILA MACLEOD
The Art of Starvation
190pp. Virago. £5.95. (Paperback, £2.95)
0 86068 164 5

In a recent survey, one in every 200 adolescent girls was shown to have suffered from anorexia nervosa. Originally more widespread in the upper social reaches, it is now increasing among working class girls. Older women are not, as used to be thought, immune; nor are men. Is the disease simply a reaction to the invasion of our lives by the commercial stereotype of glided youth (forever panting, but not from overweight)? Or is its source in the more subtle and various demands on the individual within the family? Sheila MacLeod, while not discounting the former possibility, comes down strongly on the side of the latter, citing evidence from her personal history and quoting such radical thinkers on psychiatric illness as Thomas Szasz. Her conclusion is, roughly, that when a person is defined by others in a way which conflicts with his or her own self-image, anorexia can be one of the defence mechanisms that the mind sets in action. Other theories, including the "slimming disease" notion of popular psychology, or the more sophisticated interpretation of anorexia as a revolt against sexuality, contain some truth, but fail to take into account the "positive strategy" that the apparently destructive act, however misguidedly, embodies.

Should a writer best known as a novelist should choose to treat so important and personal an experience not in fiction but in terms of documentary and thesis suggests that she may be engaged on a certain crusade. As the anorexic will away extraneous flesh, so MacLeod carefully strips away the myths, setting expert opinion and private suffering in fruitful counterpoint. Readers interested in the novelist's version should turn to her earlier work *The Snow-White Soliloquies*, a fantasy about a girl encased in a glass

coffin, which can be seen, though the author denies any conscious intention, as a metaphor for anorexia. For all its admirable objectivity, this new investigation is also the story of a psychic journey, and many of the descriptions drawn from personal experience haunt the memory like poetry.

Sheila MacLeod was sixteen when she first suffered the loss of appetite that in a few months was to reverse her weight from a hardly enormous eight stone five to five stone eight. She was the bright elder daughter of a hardworking, respectable family from Lewis in the Outer Hebrides (they migrated to England when Sheila was five). Writing about her early childhood she interestingly compares the process, common in small communities, of naming individuals according to some specific characteristic, or trade (Jones-the-Milk for example), with the way in which fond relatives will tag a child, sometimes for life, with attributes it may not in fact possess. "She's going to be stout—just like Dolly," remarked one of Sheila's aunts to her father (Dolly was her mother), provoking in the child a rage she was too "well brought up" to express. The epithets she most frequently heard, however, were the rather more intimidating ones "good", "clever" and "healthy".

In tracing the history of the disease, MacLeod raises some interesting hypotheses. For example, she suggests that during the Middle Ages anorexia may have been common among "witches". A major factor contributing to their persecution was their apparent ability to exert some control over their own and other people's physical states. Not only versed in healing and midwifery, such women were also thought to have Amenorrhoea, is of course one of the symptoms welcomed by the anorexic as her weight falls towards starvation level, (and in fact was once thought to be the cause of the illness).

In a later age, some cases of consumption as well as the genteel habit of "going into a decline" may have been due to undiagnosed anorexia. In fact when it was

first identified in the seventeenth century by the English physician Richard Mead, he dubbed it "female consumption". MacLeod points out, investigation is not made easier by the male authority of most accounts. The very fact that dominant mode of viewing the female body has been, throughout the age, male, and that it rarely coincides with the female view, is itself, she suggests, a major factor in the genesis of the disease.

Though requiring the breeding ground of a patriarchal society, anorexia nervosa seems to be matrilineal in descent. MacLeod charts with consummate tact her increasingly unsatisfactory relationship, during childhood and adolescence, with her mother. The suggestion is that the illness thrives on a kind of maternal neglect. It certainly seems significant that it was an unprecedented act of acknowledgment by the mother of her daughter's condition that marked the turning-point in her illness. Almost casually one day in the garden, Mrs MacLeod quoted Blake's "Oh sunflower, weary of time" to her daughter, who immediately identified herself with the cold virgin of the poem. How the mother offered the girl a plan, and how, as Sheila MacLeod made herself eat, she found her feelings of nausea transformed to pleasure and satisfaction, is vividly described.

This beautifully symbolic "our" wasn't, however, permanent. The writer's first relapse occurred some years later, and was produced, she suggests, by her unhappiness in the role of "Miss Paul Jones, the famous rock-singer's wife" as she then was. And she admits that she still sees anorexia nervosa as "her" disease, and as a means of taking charge of her identity when it seems to be threatened. Obviously she has the intelligence and talent to be able to live with her anorexia, and to use it creatively. But to the onlooker, the act of starvation still seems dangerously close to the "art of dying", that art practised by Sylvia Plath (and celebrated in "Lady Lazarus"), in which last-minute attentiveness on the part of other people has so frighteningly crucial a place.

Miracle ingredient

By M. A. Epstein

EWAN CAMERON and LINUS PAULING
Cancer and Vitamin C
236pp. Widenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0 393 50000 4

Any book is to be welcomed which sets out to explain to the general public the problem of cancer as it affects the research scientist, the clinician, and especially the patient. Understanding of this many-faceted disease can only reduce fear among those at risk, and with less fear, early treatment will be sought with the consequent increased likelihood of cure or long-term remission.

The first two sections of *Cancer and Vitamin C* serve just this purpose by giving a balanced and factual account of the nature and causes of cancer and the ways in which tumours can now be treated. These parts of the book, covering some eighty-three pages, deal with the subject in such a sensible and accurate way, and in such simple and comprehensible language, that they might well form recommended reading for pre-clinical medical students receiving their first introduction to the general pathology of malignant growths.

However, the book has one fatal flaw. For, even though one of the authors, Linus Pauling, is internationally known as one of only three individuals who have ever received the Nobel Prize twice, he is equally well known for his almost obsessive preoccupation with vitamin C. It is true that one of Dr Pauling's Nobel awards was for peace rather than science, but his other prize was amply justified by his enormous scientific contributions. Furthermore, his work was only beaten by a very short head in the unravelling of the fundamental role of DNA in the continuity of life, and thus narrowly missed meeting a third prize.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that Dr Pauling has a mystical faith in vitamin C quite unrelated to any serious body of scientific investigation.

For many years Pauling campaigned for the virtues of vitamin C in preventing or ameliorating the effects of virus infections, yet investigators of the highest standing have uniformly failed to find either evidence for such effects, or any explanation as to how they could be mediated. More recently Pauling has held the view that vitamin C can play an important, and even sometimes a curative role in cancer therapy and has set up a foundation in California to sponsor the use of this substance in the treatment of tumours and to propagate the belief that it has striking beneficial effects. Cancer patients have been receiving vitamin C under this programme in a Scottish hospital near Loch Lomond where Pauling collaborates with his co-author Ewan Cameron, a Scottish surgeon in our National Health Service who is also Research Professor at the Linus Pauling Institute of Science and Medicine.

In the second half of the book thirty pages are devoted to an elaborate rationale for placing so much trust in vitamin C, and this is followed by a long series of anecdotal accounts of case histories and "illustrative patients" who have been treated with vitamin C with alleged benefit or even cure. This treatment seems to have been going on for ten years and is surprising that something apparently so miraculous in cancer therapy, and with such a distinguished scientist countenancing it, should have been totally discounted by almost every expert in the field. The reason can only lie in the unsubstantiated nature of the claims which Pauling and Cameron have made. Indeed, one may only be beaten by a very short head in the unravelling of the fundamental role of DNA in the continuity of life, and thus narrowly missed meeting a third prize.

clinical trials of vitamin C in cancer patients—and this just at the time when President Nixon was pressing so hard for the "conquest of cancer" which he was hoping might coincide with the American bicentennial celebrations. It is well known that grant applications to review research are always carefully reviewed and assessed by leading authorities in every field relevant to the work, and if vitamin C really had the curative properties its book claims for it, it is inconceivable that those who spend their lives striving to alleviate the suffering of cancer should have uniformly ignored such a panacea.

Although the first part of the book could be recommended for its useful account of the cancer problem, the second part on the use of vitamin C makes the whole totally unacceptable, and the book as a whole is a waste of time. It is hoped that the authors will be persuaded by proper scientific evidence. One wonders when someone will write a really good layman's guide to this highly emotive subject.

Collecting Microscopes (120pp. Studio Vista. 26.95. 0 289 70882 6) by Gerard L.F. Turner is a well illustrated and useful guide for those who like to look at, as well as through, these optical instruments. Beginning with the first principles of the optics and the anatomy of the microscope, the book moves on to a study of the development of the principal kinds of microscopes: simple, tripod and drum, and side-pillar. The author then discusses the great achievements and great instrument makers of the 19th century, and then the production of microscopes, culminating in a resume of collectible microscope accessories. *Collecting Microscopes*, one of Christie's South Kensington Collectors Series, ends with a chapter on practical advice for the collector, and includes Christie's estimates of the auction prices likely to be realized by the instruments in the 102 illustrations. There is a full bibliography.

Language and Behaviourism

Sir. — As one of the behaviourists whose analysis of language Chomsky is said to have "demolished" (P. N. Johnson-Laird, "The whence of grammar", February 27), may I point out how badly both Chomsky and Piaget need a behavioural account of the role of the environment in shaping and maintaining verbal behaviour? Piaget's horrid metaphor of development as is as much an appeal to genetic endowment as Chomsky's innate rules of grammar. But language does not "just grow". What develops in the life of a child is a more and more demanding verbal environment. The universals which lead Chomsky to imagine that rules of grammar are innate are simply the uses of language: in all languages people make requests, give orders, ask questions, describe objects, report events, and so on. Sentences are generated, not by speakers who apply rules, but by the contingencies of reinforcement maintained by verbal communities—contingencies which I surveyed in *Verbal Behavior*. One can dismiss the role of the environment as "trivial"—one of Chomsky's favourite words—only by neglecting (or misunderstanding) the practical and theoretical achievements of an experimental analysis of behaviour.

B. F. SKINNER
Department of Psychology and Social Relations, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

Botanical Exploration

Sir. — Redmond O'Hanlon in his review of my biography of Sir Joseph Banks (March 13) suggests that I am wrong in saying that William Kerr, one of Sir Joseph's collectors, introduced *Lilium japonicum* into cultivation, and that the introduction should rightly go to Thunberg. I agree that Thunberg made the first botanical observation of the plant, or so it is generally accepted, but it was Kerr who introduced it into cultivation, and this is what I said in my book.

If Mr O'Hanlon is a student of botanical exploration he will know that a great many plants have been observed and collected, as herbarium specimens, by one man, but introduced into cultivation by another. *Davidia involuta* is one example, and perhaps more spectacular that of the Blue Poppy (*Maconopis delavayi* var. *baileyi*), which was observed by Delavay, Bailey and Forrest, but introduced into cultivation by Kingston-Ward.

I fancy that Mr O'Hanlon prefers large, scholarly, even ponderous biographies, but the purpose of mine, which seems to have been evident to most people, was to introduce Sir Joseph and his life to the general reader.

CHARLES LYTE
Carters Corner, Place, Cowbeech, Nr Hailsham, East Sussex.

Auden

Sir. — In his review of Donald Mitchell's *Waste and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936* (February 27), Philip Larkin wrote as follows: "In the last analysis, Donald Mitchell ascribes the breakdown of the partnership to Auden's increasing unacceptability." I am not sure that Auden ever wholly comprehended that while words are words, words written for consumption by music are something "different". I think this is very likely true. Real poems are not meant to be sung.

It is with regard to the setting of an opera libretto to music that argument may be made with both author and

to the editor

We have had many inquiries from readers about the size of type currently being used in the TLS. It has in fact been adopted for technical reasons as a provisional measure, and we intend to be using a larger size of type in the very near future.

reviewer: Paul Bunyan, the last work in which Auden collaborated with Britten, can hardly be said to have a "real poem" as a libretto, and two operas for which Auden provided marvellous librettos, Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and Hans Werner Henze's *Elgy for Young Lovers*, are completely ignored. In a conversation with him on the writing of librettos and those for Britten's operas in particular, in Oxford in the last year of his life, Auden said: "It is a great pity that Britten's operas did not have librettos written by a professional librettist such as me".

MILO KEYNES.
3 Brunswick Walk, Cambridge.

Gout

Sir. — As someone who suffers from periodic attacks of gout, I was fascinated by Pat Rogers' "cultural epidemiology" of gout (March 20). However, I was disappointed to find that he did not comment on, or venture to explain, one important cultural phenomenon associated with it (or at least, with my gout)—that other people find it funny. I doubt if this reaction can be explained as an embarrassed response to others' pain—after all we don't laugh at toothache. Is it that my friends believe that I have unwittingly revealed an otherwise concealed penchant for port, roast beef, and high living in general and regard it as something of which I should be mildly ashamed?

GRENVILLE WALL.
24 Fairfield Road, London N8.

Sir. — Pat Rogers provides an instructive and amusing survey of gout (March 20) but entirely omits consideration of those remedies which were the most commonly used for hundreds of years: those supplied by the hedgerows. Culpeper lists eighteen herbal cures for gout. The most popular was ground elder, which is still known in some parts as "gout weed". It is yet another pointer to the connection between gout and rich living—as well as being an oblique comment on practical mobs—that the plant was also known as "Bishops' weed".

DENIS SHAW.
Clewley Rectory, Parsonage Lane, Windsor, Berkshire.

The Wallace Collection

Sir. — According to the criteria of *The Good Museums Guide* the Wallace Collection would have failed over the last three years on the grounds of a) space: media closure of public inventories b) no guide books c) temporary lighting and d) improvised display. And if the building works which have made this all unavailing persist much beyond their present estimated completion date of December 1981 one might add e) clapped-out curtain. But as your reviewer implies (March 20) there are still some incidental attractions, such as Rembrandt, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck.

JOHN INGAMMELS.
Director, The Wallace Collection, Manchester Square, London W1M 6BN.

Dante

Sir. — I have only recently seen William Anderson's letter (February 27) about my review of his *Dante the Maker*. I am sorry he feels I misrepresented his views about poetry by saying that the experience from which it derives, in his opinion, "is likely to take the form, in the first instance, of a visionary message from the unconscious". But I fear that he attaches too much weight to my use of the word unconscious.

As his letter shows, I could hardly have failed to take in his points about the conscious character of the creative process. However these seemed to me a great deal less noteworthy than his insistence on the visionary character of Dante's initial experience; and unless he believes that the visions he speaks of came to Dante from above, what else can one say but that, in the first instance, they came to him from the unconscious?

DAVID ROBEY.
Wolston College, Oxford OX2 6UD.

Elizabethan Notions of Heroism

Sir. — Since I think that the prevailing Elizabethan notion of antique heroism in the 1590s was a rather coarse misunderstanding, and since I have imagined for many years that Shakespeare, in this matter educated I think by Plutarch, thought the same, your review of Richard Loe's book on Chapman and Shakespeare by Stanley Wells interested me greatly (March 13). But it is surely a mistake to confine this discussion to the theatre. There is a sonnet for example by that ms Gabriel Harvey, who speaks at times with the very voice of Ancient Pistol, which precisely encapsulates the misunderstanding of antiquity and honour which Richard Loe seems to connect principally with Chapman's first seven books of the *Imagines* (1598). Harvey's sonnet is the fourteenth of *Greene's Memorials* (1592). He has been talking about famous knights. "Ah, that Sir Humphrey Gilbert should be dead! Ah, that Sir Philip Sidney should be dead!"

To live in motion, and action least:
To eternize Entelechy divine:
Where Plutarch's Lives: where Argonautics brave:
Where all Heroique wanderments concur.
Oh, Oh, and Oh a thousand thousand times.
That thirsty Eare might heare
Archangels rimes.
In 1598 Shakespeare must surely have been lughing at this kind of thing for six years, if not since his school days.

PETER LEVI.
Austins Farm, Stonefield, Oxford OX7 2PU.

Christianity and Homosexuality

Sir. — May one whose name has been invoked several times in connection with this subject, express regret that "homosexuality" has been regularly and confusingly used to denote a kind of behaviour? Vern L. Bullough (Letter, March 20) writes of "Christian legislation against homosexuality", and of penitentials "hostile to homosexuality", etc; but there is no evidence of legislation against, or hostility to, the personal sexual condition known as "homosexuality". This sexual differentiation was not recognized in the past; legislators, theologians, and moralists were concerned simply with venerable practices between persons of the same sex. The Wolfenden report, in 1957, drew a clear distinction between "homosexuality" as propensity and "homosexuality" as behaviour, and it is desirable that this distinction be observed in the interests of accuracy and clarity, and to avoid giving offence. In the book to which your reviewer and correspondents have been kind enough to refer, I have been careful always to use the expression "homosexuality" to denote the behaviour, and to distinguish it from the condition. It would be helpful if some sort of usage of this kind could be established in order to avoid confusion. Incidentally, I was not aware that I had agreed that "medieval writers misinterpreted the Christian message", but perhaps I have not understood what Mr Bullough meant by this statement.

SHERWIN BAILEY.
23 Kippax Avenue, Wells, Somerset BA5 2TT.

Place-Names

Sir. — In his kind appreciation of my *Place-Name Changes since 1900* (Reminders, March 13), Eric Korn wonders why I include the changes of Cawnpore/Kanpur and Kingtown/Dun Laoghaire but do not give Benares/Varnasi of Dublin/Bally Atha Clíath.

The straightforward answer is that both the latter places are still widely known internationally, even if unofficially or inaccurately by their traditional names, and that no governmental renaming has taken place except at a local level. Indeed, Dublin ("black pool") has not really been renamed at all, since Bally Atha Clíath ("the town at the hurdle ford") is simply an alternative name preferred by current

Irish speakers to commemorate the historic fording of the river Liffey by means of woad withies rather than preserving the equally ancient Celtic name for the river itself.

Cawnpore, on the other hand, was officially renamed in 1948, together with a number of other places in India, by authority of the Government of India, and Kingstown, commemorating a visit by George IV in 1821, reverted to its Irish name ("fort of Laoghaire") exactly a century later.

Mr Korn may rest assured that Zimbababwe, Kiriwani, Vanuatu, and other recent renamings and reversions will all appear in a second edition of the book planned for 1984.

ADRIAN ROOM.
173 The Causeway, Petersfield, Hants GU31 4LN.

British Library

Sir. — Nicolas Barker's supportive piece on The American Trust for The British Library (January 9) noted properly the role of the then British Museum as early on a place of pilgrimage for USA readers, as in the case of W. H. Prescott, the historian, in 1850. Some thirty years before, his predecessor as an American man of letters, and subsequently WHP's good friend, Washington Irving, had repaid his own debts to BM in his *Sketch Book* (1819-1820), in "The Art of Book-Making". The designedly whimsical one of "Geoffrey Crayon" in this descriptive sketch ("The door yielded to my hand, with that facility with which the portals of enchanted castles yield to the adventurous Knight errant") only served to emphasize the genuineness of the writer's respect for this transatlantic centre for learning. Surely it also prepared the way for the host of his countrymen and readers who would follow.

ANDREW B. MYERS.
President, The Washington Irving Society, English Department, Fordham University, New York, NY 10458.

Stauffenberg

Sir. — In his zeal to see my novel, *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, converted into a movie, your reviewer (Issue of February 6) says the book ends with the execution of Stauffenberg and his collaborators. If he had read carefully, he would have noticed that, in fact, Stauffenberg is executed on page 224, which may indeed be what he remembers on page 349 (although the Count could perhaps have fled that bit from Ernst Jünger; the dead have uncanny privileges, like book reviewers, although the dead are livelier in some instances and less coarse-grained).

By quoting almost in its entirety the opening paragraph of my novel, your reviewer has attracted to that paragraph a good deal of praise, by the way, and I am obliged.

PAUL WEST.
University Park, Pa 16802.

'Water Over Stone'

Sir. — Without wishing to cloud Vicki Feaver's appreciative notice of the new book of poems by Frances Horowitz (March 20), I write to correct a couple of inaccuracies. *Water Over Stone* is not "Her first collection", but her third. In 1967 the St. Albert's Press, Aylesford, published her earliest *Poems*, and in 1970 *The High Tower* appeared as *New Departures* No. 6 — slimmer volumes, but collections for all that, and still available from the address below.

The first two words of the first line of Ms Feaver's quotation from "Letter to be sent by air" should of course read "my fingers" and not "my fingers"; and the fourth from last line of this extract is in fact "how you are torn out of me" and not "town".

MICHAEL HOROVITZ.
New Departures, Bilsley, Stroud, Glos GL6 7BU.

'Among this week's contributors' is on page 366.

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A community and its commission

By Bruce Boucher

JOSÉPH CONNORS:

Borromini and the Roman Oratory: Style and Society
375pp. MIT Press. £27.90.
0 262 03071 3

Prospective readers of *Borromini and the Roman Oratory* may open the book with more than a little scepticism. The dust-jacket carries tributes from Howard Hubbard and David Colvin to the effect that it "is the single most important contribution to the study of Borromini that has ever been made" and "a magnificent work of scholarship in its breadth of approach and thoroughness of details". This is handy stuff, even by the encomiastic standards of such writing, but, happily, it is true. Joseph Connors has approached Borromini's work for the Oratorians in a brilliant and somewhat unorthodox way; he has studied the interaction of patronage and urban pressures, of economics and function, of imagery and perception in order to present a densely textured picture of the Casa dei Filippini in Rome. His examination not only reveals how Borromini's designs for the complex evolved, but also shows how autonomous forces, in and around the Casa, helped to create the buildings as we experience them today.

At first glance, the Casa dei Filippini might seem a less promising subject for a monograph than other works by Borromini, such as San Carlo or Sant'Ivo or even the Propaganda Fide. Borromini was employed by the Oratorians at an early stage in his career and had to reconcile his ideas with a pre-existing model and a set of patrons who often did not appreciate what he was trying to do. Beyond that, his work there lacks the obvious brilliance of San Carlo or the maturity of the Propaganda Fide. Yet, as Professor Connors maintains, the Roman Oratory occupies a crucial place within Borromini's career and puts much of the architect's later work into a proper perspective.

Borromini was employed by the Oratorians between 1637 and his dismissal in 1652, a period in which the architect's ideas were in a constant process of development. The Casa gave him the chance to impose his concepts on a large complex and to work for patrons who were willing to pay for a high standard of building, however much they protested to the contrary. In addition, his years with the Oratorians led Borromini into a close collaboration with Virgilio Spada, a priest who later brought the architect to the attention of Pope Innocent X and opened to him the possibilities of papal patronage.

Professor Connors places Borromini's work for the followers of St Philip Neri within the larger context of the history of the site on which their buildings were constructed. In doing so, he demonstrates more clearly than had previously been appreciated the extent to which Borromini was constrained by the building patterns adopted by the Oratorians earlier in the century. St Philip and his followers had been given the small church of Santa Maria in Vallicella in 1575. Their first priority had been the rebuilding of the old

church, around which they settled in makeshift quarters. After construction had begun, the plan of the church was twice enlarged, and by the end of the century, it had grown into a structure rivaling the Gesù. Similarly, impromptu changes affected construction of the Casa and its oratory. These buildings were originally planned for the area to the east of the church until the threatened purchase of land to the west by the Barnabites forced the Oratorians to shift their site in that direction.

Such was the situation in 1621. As Connors observes, the Oratorians were committed to a site and a scale of building far removed from the humble intention of the first generation of Filippini; they had also acquired the habit of making changes to their projects after they were under way. Such changes reflected the idiosyncratic nature of the Oratory as well as a determined attempt on the part of the fathers to find a *via media* between the princely dwellings of the Jesuits and Theatines and the austerity of the monastic orders. These same impulses and improvisations were to recur again and again in Borromini's dealings with the fathers and left their stamp upon the emerging group of buildings.

One of the most important contributions of *Borromini and the Roman Oratory* is to correct the history of the project as told by Borromini and Virgilio Spada. The general tenor of their accounts is that Borromini won a competition to design the Oratory after other architects had demonstrated their incompetence. The story told by the documents and drawings points in another direction, for there was no competition and Borromini was employed as the executor of another man's project. By drawing attention to this, Connors places Borromini's role in a clearer perspective and also resuscitates the reputation of the architect he supplanted, Paolo Maruscelli. This young and bookish architect produced a comprehensive project for the oratory, audience chambers, refectory and living quarters in 1627, ten years before the arrival of Borromini. Maruscelli had drawn upon the help of the anticlastic Spada to create a design of novelty and intelligence.

His project also goes a long way towards explaining the kind of building the Oratorians wanted for themselves. Two influences in particular guided Maruscelli and Spada in formulating their ideas: Palladio's *Trattato di Architettura* and the *Carta di Venezia* and Soli's Palazzo della famiglia Borghese in Rome. The reasons behind this eclecticism are simple but compelling. The Carta stood apart from contemporary Roman building types, thus distinguishing the Oratorians from the Jesuits and Theatines, a distinction which the fathers were at some pains to establish in their way of life. The palace of the Borghese is an even more interesting choice of model as it was semi-institutional, being neither aristocratic nor exactly monastic in concept. It was precisely this kind of halfway house which suited the Oratorians and was eventually embodied in Borromini's work for them.

Just how Borromini warped the role of Maruscelli as architect to the fathers remains a mystery, but Connors shows that

it was not, as Borromini later maintained, via a competition. The Oratorians had rarely used competitions, preferring a procedure called a *consulta*. This took the form of a consultation whereby an architect was set to solve a problem with the benefit of other architects' ideas for reference. Such a method agreed with the piecemeal approach in building that the Filippini had adopted, and there is no doubt that the fair which Borromini brought to the solution of the site and elevation of the oratory—the focal point of the congregation's activities—was recommended him to their attention. There is no doubt, either, that Borromini's arrival was aided by Spada, always on the lookout for new talent. The irony of his appointment, however, was that Borromini did not have a free hand to introduce his own ideas; he was designated by the fathers as an adaptor of Maruscelli's project, not as an innovator.

In the event, Borromini and Spada were able to bend the older project to their will—"putting a well tailored suit on an ungainly body" was the architect's less than charitable explanation of the process. It is Spada who emerges from Connors's account as the crucial figure in mediating between Borromini and a confused, often restive body of priests and laymen. Together, the two men formed a strong team, with the financial capabilities of the priest matching the effectiveness of the architect. Above all, it was Spada's ability to understand architecture and his fellow Oratorians that enabled Borromini's ideas to become a reality. *Borromini and the Roman Oratory* provides a fascinating account of the financial mechanisms behind the Oratorian patronage and of the way in which Borromini and Spada pushed and pulled the Filippini into a project they did not always understand. Often Spada himself would resolve a deadlock between the fathers and their architect by contributing a modest sum of money to underwrite some change in plan. This in turn would produce a chain reaction, leading to more radical solutions elsewhere.

Connors gives us several informative pages about the high cost of Borromini's work for the Oratory and the expensive nature of the total project. By his reckoning, its cost may have been higher than for Sixtus V's Lateran palace or Maderno's nave and facade for St Peter's. Such comparisons can only be a rough guide, but they are supported by the high standards of design set by Borromini. One telling comparison comes in the cost of marble door-frames; those designed by Maruscelli averaged seventy-six scudi while one of Borromini's cost 700 scudi for the workshop alone.

Patronage and economics are only a part of *Borromini and the Roman Oratory*. It also contains much new information on Borromini's architecture and on the evolution of his ideas. The account of the Oratory's facade, one of the architect's most notable achievements, is especially valuable. As early as 1621, the congregation entertained the idea of building an ecclesiastical facade for their proposed oratory, and when Maruscelli subsequently established its location to the west of the church, the necessity for some sort of

facade as a counterweight to the monumental Santa Maria in Vallicella would have seemed inescapable. There were, however, problems with the location, chiefly to do with the alignment of the oratory with a courtyard behind and the articulation of its street facade. Borromini has generally been given credit for solving this nest of problems, but an examination of several drawings connected with the first stages of the oratory leads Connors to see another hand as having fulfilled that function. He tentatively identifies it as that of an older architect, Girolamo Rinaldi, whose ideas were then incorporated into a second project by Borromini. It was Borromini's second, now lost, project that won the favour of the Oratorians and led to his appointment as sole architect in July 1637.

With the interior of the oratory, Borromini was bound by the customary design of such buildings as they had evolved during the sixteenth century. His innovations, as Connors notes, lie more in the realm of the psychology of appearances. The exterior gave more scope to his imagination and, again, was not a case of an immediate act of genius but a series of steps taken in response to changing circumstances. According to his reading of Borromini's first project of 1637, the facade was not to be curved but indented, although the drawing is so poorly reproduced that one must take Connors's analysis on trust. It subsequently grew from a five to a seven-bay facade when the Oratorians decided to move the library to the floor above the oratory, one year after the facade had begun. Presumably unperturbed, Borromini increased the height while expanding the facade's width. Change was particularly registered in the ornamentation, "the artist's brushstroke" in the author's felicitous phrase. Borromini lavished his genius on this so that the inferior material of the facade, brickwork, was turned to advantage. The facade of the oratory became more than curved; its inflection conveyed a suppleness reminiscent of a sculptor's model. In this context it is worth noting, as Connors does note, that Borromini seems to have made models of his buildings in wax; the analogy

with sculptors, particularly with Borromini's hero Michelangelo, is a telling one. Connors's discussion of the facade is one of the highpoints of an extremely rewarding book. He has a way of writing that does justice to the intricacies of Borromini's works. It is curious, though, that his account of the Casa rarely shows the same degree of enthusiasm as the few pages on the facade. He often fails to convey a vivid sense of individual rooms like the *aula di ricreazione* with its splendid fireplace. This is a small defect and may be attributable to the vast amount of ground which the author had to cover in his account of the buildings of the Oratorians.

The decision to write an extended account of the Roman Oratory is amply justified by the results, but there often seems to be too much foreground and not enough background for the subject. Borromini's other buildings are mentioned all too fleetingly, and the text is extremely condensed, with a disproportionate amount of material being put into the catalogue. The result is that the flow of the narrative is constantly interrupted by the need to turn to the notes and catalogue entries. Moreover, the closeness with which the author has studied the seventeenth-century history of the Vallicella site means that the proposed antithesis between the first and second generations of the Oratorians is not developed, and the presence of the late sixteenth-century church is inadequately treated.

A lengthier text with brief catalogue notes would have spared the reader some pains, and might have enabled the publisher to allow more space for larger and better illustrations of the drawings. In many cases Borromini's own faint drawings have vanished from the page, which is disturbing since many of Connors's arguments are predicated upon a close analysis of the graphic evidence.

But the merits of *Borromini and the Roman Oratory* shine through in spite of the dingy illustrations. With this study, Professor Connors has vaulted into the forefront of authorities on Roman baroque architecture. One awaits impatiently further instalments of his studies in the architecture of Borromini.

By Benedict Read

Those for whom Thomas Couture is the artist of a single picture, "The Romans of the Decadence", might well ask whether he or it requires lengthy examination, however sensationally lubricious that painting may have appeared at the time it was first shown in 1847. Albert Boime clearly thinks there is more to Couture than this, and he sets out to give him a specific place in art-history, relating his life and work to the political and cultural realities of his time, and tracing his influence, via his pupils, on later art. The book is in three parts. The first part seeks to define the state of French society during the first half of the nineteenth century, a period which saw the triumph of the bourgeoisie and of the political and cultural ideal of the "juste milieu". Part Two, which is the longest, then traces the development of Couture's painting. In response to these social and political circumstances, Part Three, finally, seeks to define the state of French society during the last half of the nineteenth century, a period which saw the triumph of the bourgeoisie and of the political and cultural ideal of the "juste milieu". Part Two, which is the longest, then traces the development of Couture's painting. In response to these social and political circumstances, Part Three, finally, seeks to define the state of French society during the last half of the nineteenth century, a period which saw the triumph of the bourgeoisie and of the political and cultural ideal of the "juste milieu".

The first and third sections of Professor Boime's study are the least successful; not because of the miss of detail and observations that they contain but because of the way Boime applies what he has learned. This is particularly true of the 180 pages in which Couture is presented as, in effect, the father of modern art—an astonishing conclusion to come to. Of course he had many pupils, and among these were Manet and Pissarro de Chavannes, through whom Boime manages to set up a

whole nexus of tenuous connection, which ultimately associates such names as Bonazzi and Jackson Pollock with that of Couture.

The central section of the book is more impressive. Here, Boime sets out to examine the quite substantial body of work which Couture produced. He has tracked down many of the paintings and galls that he can get out of each picture, investigating its composition, palette, and meaning, personal meaning, artistic sources, relationship to the times, and so on. He makes excellent use of his source material and his profuse detail as well as the pertinence of Boime's observations make this part of the book both stimulating and worthwhile.

The focus of nineteenth-century art history studies has recently been changing away from the great names like Delacroix or such schools as the Impressionists, and towards less important figures. Professor Boime has now put Couture in his place, and reminded us that if we are properly to comprehend the art of this period we must also interpret its lesser lights.

An important new reference work in the field of modern art is the *Catalogue of The Tate Gallery's Collection of Modern Art*, then works by British Artists, compiled by Ronald Alley (1999). Tate Gallery in association with Sotheby Parke Bernet.

The Tate's Modern Art collection volume to the Tate's Modern Art collection, but unlike the earlier British catalogue, which was a small volume, this is a substantial work. Each artist is represented, from J.M.W. Turner to Ignazio Zuloaga, is given a 250-word biographical note, and each work in the collection is described in full, with details of provenance, exhibitions and literature, as well as broader discussion of such questions as subject, dating and circumstances of composition.

By Stefan Muthesius

Arts and Crafts Architecture
The Search for Earthly Paradise
224pp. Architectural Press. £12.95.
0 85139 049 8

"I started to write this book, because I needed it myself", Peter Davey tells us, and it is true, as he claims, that there has been no comprehensive study to date of the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement, even if many of the names and buildings associated with it—Webb, Voysey, Lutyens—are exceedingly well known. In his lively book Davey relies much on recent research. Its first and most striking feature is the number of pictures it contains—very generous at the price—of lesser-known buildings by the great masters of the movement; as well as the refreshingly new views it provides of their better-known work. As a handbook *Arts and Crafts Architecture* is relatively full: it includes short accounts of minor or medium-rank practitioners, such as Bidlake of Birmingham, or Walter Gye, and it makes use of some of the more obscure literature of the period; though the most voluminous contemporary source, *The Builder*, has not been sufficiently explored.

The division of the book is primarily chronological, and by architects. The chapters devoted to the "Country" and to the City respectively are further collections of the careers of individual architects, and as the author himself admits, the Arts and Crafts Movement contributed little to public urban architecture. But, if it is the theory behind Arts and Crafts architecture, which needs further investigation, what exactly is meant by "Arts and Crafts"? "Art of building"? Perhaps "theory" is too good a word and the explanation lies entirely in architectural practice. In the *Arts and Crafts* movement, and especially the way they approached their buildings, Davey does provide some detail here, in the case of Webb, Prior, Barry and Lutyens; but one would have liked more, especially in a book written by an architect. In a fascinating aside he makes clear that Lutyens's

Cross purposes

By Nicholas Penny

CHARLES JENCKS (Editor):

*Post-Modern Classicism
The New Synthesis*
144pp. Architectural Design with Academy Editions. £7.50 0 85670 730 9

This book, which is published by the glossy magazine *Architectural Design* (and like it), is an anthology of photographs and drawings of buildings recently erected or projected, with a few words added by the architects concerned and an introduction and running commentary by Charles Jencks, impresario of this new and absurdly entitled "ism". Is there really a "convergence" of styles "within Post-Modernism" and can this really constitute a movement when the architects themselves seem to share no sense of common purpose? Such questions do not detain Jencks. He even suggests that a "mini-Renaissance" may be on the way. Perhaps his idea of the Renaissance is as odd as his notion of Classicism, which seems to mean anything pre-modern and non-gothic that contemporary architects evoke or misquote: "Cape Cod Vernacular", Versailles, the Brighton Pavilion, Bouffé, Fischer von Erlach, San Miniato al Monte.

From a new Classicism one has a right to expect a system of ideal proportions, certainly lucidity and harmony of plan and elevation, but there is less evidence of this in the buildings that are the book's subject than there was when the Modern Movement was in full swing. As for monumentality, which one would also expect, it is certainly attempted at Les Arcades du Lac, the glum pre-cast concrete new town by Ricardo Bofill and Taller de Arquitectura which includes some painfully ungainly cylinders and triangles. It may also be attempted by James Stirling at Rice, Berlin and Mombasa, which are however, inadequately illustrated. In

his drawing of the Chemistry Library at Mombasa, incidentally, Stirling has introduced a peacock. This should put his soundproofing to a severe test and will also tear up the lawns and foul the skylights.

There is no evidence here of any serious desire to revive the solemnity or the grandeur of the ancient stone architecture of Greece and Rome. But then, to take Classicism "straight" would be "too easy, or boring, or expensive, or conformist". It would certainly involve self-discipline and a genuine sense of tradition which would be extraordinary today. The style of an architect is now conceived of as something like a trade-mark. In such circumstances there will be no common style, certainly no submission to ancient authorities. Competitive idiosyncrasy is the chief impression one receives from this anthology. But work of interest is certainly included. Jeremy Dixon's jazzy variation on the London terrace-house of 1900 looks successful; Rhodes House, Los Angeles by Moore, Ruble and Yudell looks elegant; and Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans, with its parody of the orders in neon and stainless steel, displays something of the scholarly wit (and the school-boy humour) found in the Italian villa garden of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Jencks implies that the "eclecticism" of Modernism and the "snobism" of Classicism have been transcended, and claims that "Mass-culture has opened classicism to the masses as well as the classes". But it seems that appreciating architecture is still hard work. Looking at Shin Toki's Sanwa building you must ask yourself "Is this a rusticated base turned on its side and curved? Is it the inside curve of the Villa Giulia turned to the outside street? Is it a face house embracing the street or a Fascist headquarters of the thirties?" and in order to recognize that Robert Venturi's Chesham Hall House revives the Queen Anne Revival you must imagine that half of it has sunk below ground.

If his text is persevered with it becomes clear that Dalis has made some attempt to place Gaudí in a historical context, but he surprisingly fails to relate his achievements to those of the Catalan Renaissance of which Gaudí was essentially a part, although the most remarkable part. His development cannot be considered separately from that of the other architects of the Catalan movement like Lluís Domènech y Montaner, whose sculptured decorations, with their strange submarine motifs, closely parallel several of Gaudí's, or Francesc Berenguer, Gaudí's collaborator who made most of the drawings for the Sagrada Família. Domènech's and Gaudí's and ironwork, moreover, is inseparable from the rise of the Catalan metallurgical industry, one of the inspirations of the movement.

Not can the character of much of Gaudí's work, his ironwork and interior designs especially, be understood apart from the Art Nouveau movement that was pervading Europe in his time and promptly reached Catalonia as the streets of Barcelona bear witness. The link with Hector Guimard is especially obvious and could usefully have been discussed. The resemblance of Guimard's *Humbert de Romans* (1905) to some of Gaudí's interiors cannot be just coincidence. And this leads on to a more fundamental question: how aware was Gaudí of the theoretical and structural researches of Viollet-le-Duc? Dalis provides no answer.

Whatever the deficiencies of the writing, *Gaudí Furniture* can nevertheless be highly valued as a collection of pictures. The book is elegant to look at and moderately priced. By no means all Gaudí's furniture is included but the examples Dalis has chosen are more fully recorded here than in any previous publication. They are photographed close-up and from all angles, on some pages in colour. They are also shown in drawings, which the author calls "graphic interpretations". These, he explains in his introduction, are the work of young Neoplatonist architects, students and painters commissioned by him. They are the best things in the book, revealing the essence of each object depicted and providing an invaluable geometrical analysis.

Gaudí's furniture well repays such detailed study. The photographs and drawings go for example how the famous Casa Calvet and Casa Batlló wooden chairs, in

Fantastic accessories

By J.M. Richards

RICCARDO DALIS:

Gaudí Furniture
144pp. Academy Editions. £10.50.
0 85670 622 1

Buried deep in Riccardo Dalis's almost impenetrable text are some acute observations about Antoni Gaudí y Cornet's peculiar genius as revealed in the accessories of his buildings, "furniture" being used in this instance to mean much more than chairs and tables; it includes iron gates and grates, chimneys and ventilation shafts and those sinuous concrete benches faced with a mosaic of broken tiles that every architectural pilgrim to Barcelona remembers as outlining the terraces of the Parque Güell.

Professor Dalis's approach to Gaudí, though nominally that of an architect, is by way of anthropology, philosophy and psychology, the last reflecting the author's obvious interest in Freudian symbolism. None of these subjects lends itself to clarity of language at the best of times, but the reader has to study so hard to get at the author's meaning that he is bound to ask himself how the vagaries of this publication came about. Professor Dalis teaches advanced architectural composition at the University of Naples. *Gaudí Furniture* was designed and printed in Italy and first published there two years ago, presumably in Italian. No translator is named and the reader can only assume that Dalis has written the English version himself. This was unwise. Sentences like "Form is conceived as a synthesis whose finality is not external to itself in its pure function and in its autogenation" and "Not only in his furnishings is functionality contained in an imperious morphological domination" are hard on the reader whether they arise from poor translation or from an insecure command of English. As well as his language, some of Dalis's scholarly references are very odd. Can there really be a group of "famous" contemporary Italian designers called Pickett, Sottsass, Mari, Minskink Link, Pessi and Mendini?

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which are combined a scientific instinct for ergonomics with an organic subtlety of form, respond to the structural nature of their material at the same time as they exploit it sculpturally. The legs curve and twist like the roots of a tree; the joints and the ends of the arms become knuckle-like knobs that demand to be appreciated by feel as well as by the eye. The Batlló small chair is, I suppose, the most remarkable of Gaudí's furniture designs; of many others included here the dressing-table for the Palacio Güell is a particular delight. All reflect the same qualities of fantasy and originality, and the same intellectual logic, as the buildings for which they were designed. Dalis rightly emphasizes Gaudí's practice of giving verbal rather than graphic instructions to his craftsmen, a reversion to an earlier day that makes his perhaps the last significant furniture before serial production took over.

Gaudí Furniture is a fascinating picture book, but even when it is regarded as no more than that, complaints must still be made about its make-up. The pictures seem to be arranged according to no system and with only a vague relationship to the text. There is no list of illustrations, so that a second look at any piece of furniture means leafing through the whole book to find it. There is no index. And there is one other surprising omission: the book concludes with a biographical note which tells us the place where Gaudí was born but not the year (it was 1828), and that he died in Barcelona in 1926 "the victim of an accident". In fact he was run over by a tram, an occurrence that one would have expected Professor Dalis, with his fondness for symbolism, to have made much of.

Metropolitan lines

By Peter Howell

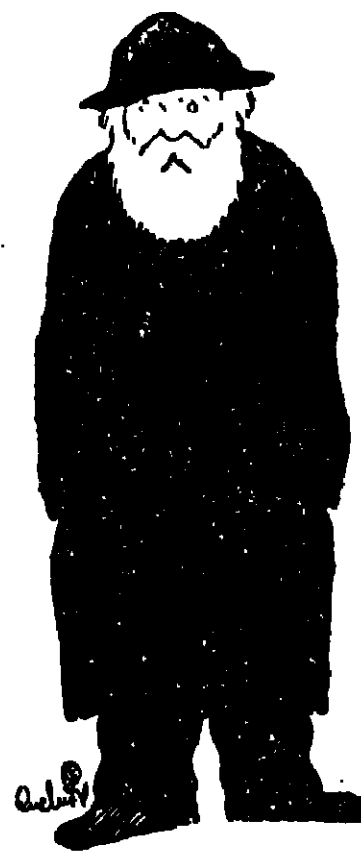
GAVIN STAMP and COLIN AMERY
Victorian Buildings of London
1837-1887

An Illustrated Guide
175pp. Architectural Press £12.95
0 85139 500 7

This fascinating and eccentric book describes 101 London buildings erected between 1837 and 1887, of which ninety-five are still with us, while the remainder (whose names are surrounded with black borders) form an obituary section. "Building" is interpreted generously, so that whole groups such as Harrow School and Kew Gardens count as one.

The selection could scarcely be described as unbiased: although it includes a vinegar warehouse, a pumping station, an orphan asylum and a market, it favours churches (a third of the total), especially High Anglican ones. As the authors claim to have based their choice on architectural merit, this is not entirely unreasonable; but they also claim to offer a representative collection, so that at least one example of a good Nonconformist chapel might have been included (though Waterhouse's remarkable Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church squeezes in with St Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill).

The amazing thing about the book, however, is just how much it contains, so that it hardly seems fair to point out omissions. Of course the great public buildings are here—the Palace of Westminster, South Kensington, the Law Courts, even Westminster Abbey and St Paul's—but there are all kinds



A contemporary vignette of Gaudí which is reproduced in the book reviewed here.

of out-of-the-way treasures hardly known even to the expert. St Francis's, Pottery Lane, for example, or the Sacred Heart Convent, Hammersmith, and Sunnyside, Sydenham—all works of J. F. Bentley, whose Westminster Cathedral falls outside the scope of the book.

Illustrations are generously supplied, mostly small but well produced, deliberately chosen so as to avoid the obvious, and including an intriguing medley of drawings, engravings, and old photographs, often showing designs different from those actually erected. The photographs are all dated—a laudable practice. There are two plans, and a neat introduction. The double columns of the gazetteer are packed with detailed information, anecdotes, and forthright opinions. Not surprisingly, the obituary section is rich in pungent denunciations, whether of "the forward-looking mediocrities of BR's management" or of dons—"the worst of vandals, combining naked philistinism with intellectual superiority and an unshakable conviction of the importance of their own priorities and the excellence of their own taste".

The authors are so refreshingly independent in their judgments that it comes as a surprise to find them repeating an unjustified orthodoxy, as when they quote Pevsner's (but surely they mean Nairn's?) denigration of Decimus Burton's Temperance House at Kew, by comparison with the earlier Palm House—a comparison which fails to take into account the very specific and entirely different brief to which Burton was working. Their misleading account of the authorship of the Palm House (Richard Turner deserves much more credit than Burton) is one of what seem to be strikingly few errors.

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GORDON FRASER GF Books Fitzroy Road London NW1

John Bain

Dealing with dynamics

By Roger Jones

BRUCE COLE:
*Stenese Paintings: From its Origins to the
 Fifteenth Century.*
 241pp. 110 black-and-white illustrations.
 5 pages in colour. Harper and Row, £12.50.
 0 06 33090 1

Masaccio and the Art of Early Renaissance Florence, intended as a general history of Florentine painting (1375-1430 for the "student or general interested reader" and aiming to convey "a feeling for the stylistic dynamics of the crucial decades", would have been more appropriately entitled "Masaccio, Donatello and late gothic art in Florence". Although in his opening words Bruce Cole describes himself as "one concerned with the art of the Renaissance", the word "Renaissance" is not further used except once where it is described, properly as a "stylistically vague term".

The author's reluctance to abuse the venerable location is the sign not so much of a desire for methodological precision as of a rejection of many traditionally held views about the cultural history of the period, views which have given it its name. Gone is the antiquarian notion that the renewal of the visual arts in early fifteenth-century Florence had much to do with the passionate interest shown by many of its distinguished practitioners in the culture of the ancient world. True, this phenomenon is less clearly demonstrable in painting than in other fields and one should not carp at simplifying omissions in such a brief survey as the book under review, but to characterize the "stylistic dynamics" of the work of Donatello and Ghiberti (here treated at some length) without reference to this theme will surely mislead general readers. It is at any rate perverse to ask the reader to find the exquisitely gothic hair of a Madonna by Lorenzo Monaco similar to that of the Madonna in the classicizing sculpted "Annunciation" group in the Duomo museum.

One, too, is the idea that Masaccio developed in painting a scientific approach to the representation of visual appearances, comparable to the exactitude then sought in other disciplines like philology or history. Many may sympathize with Professor Cole's evident lack of interest in the modern literature on perspective, but few will agree that Masaccio's own interest was in a "so-called scientific aspect of picture-making." It is unwise to under-estimate the mathematical concerns of an artist who could spend a whole day's work on the exact foreshortening of a capital, as Masaccio did repeatedly in the "Trinity". And it is not surprising that Cole admits to being baffled by the work. The mathematical precision we find in the "Trinity" was, of course, made possible by (and in this case may even be due to) the genius of Brunelleschi, who had demonstrated his discovery of perspective in two lost paintings. The author surprisingly does not mention these facts and the uninformal reader will have to know Brunelleschi as a minor sculptor and architect only. Of Alberti he will hear nothing.

Clearly, we are being offered an unusual view of early quattrocento Florence. It is one which develops a thesis of Cole's earlier monograph on Agnolo Gaddi, that Gaddi and his generation have been under-estimated, particularly in regard to their influence on Masaccio's generation. There are two difficulties. One is that the influence would be a delayed one, the era of Lorenzo Monaco intervening. The other, more serious, is that Cole, reasonably if rather insistently, characterizes the art of Gaddi and his contemporaries in terms of a return to the style of Giotto, but he does not squarely confront the traditional view that Masaccio's achievement is in part due to a direct rethinking about the grand old man himself, rather than to the influence of his late trecento followers.

Professor Cole is encouraged in his view by the elements of continuity he finds in the

tradition of Florentine painting, arising from the way artists were trained in workshops to imitate the style of the master. In fact he is so convinced of the power of this continuity that he feels able to assess the degree of originality shown by lost works (ie, the unsuccessful entries in the competition of 1401). The revolutionary Masaccio famously tests this rule. Even with the help of the controversial S. Giovanni triptych (here blithely described as a "known work by Masaccio"), it is not possible to suggest a specific teacher, and in a discussion of the stylistic idioms to which Masaccio "must have been susceptible" we are offered the following as some kind of positive result: "Of course, the fact that he was not influenced by Lorenzo Monaco demonstrates that he did not accept them all indiscriminately." Donatello, too, presents difficulties. Fortunately, the early David can readily be seen as the product of someone who had worked with Ghiberti. After that, "the chain reaction of his own style propelled him forward."

Cole's method of accounting for style is not, however, limited to the detection of influences from other artists and to meta- even nuclear physics. We are given wider cultural explanations. From one so sceptical of the powerfully argued thesis of Millard Meiss about the effects on art of the Black Death we have a right to expect something more than the banal circularities here presented. Why did Donatello and Masaccio produce "more immediate religious images"? "Something in society had suddenly created a need for more realistic accessible representation". This something arises from a vintage Burckhardtian "newfound attitude towards man", cautiously qualified so that we hear of the newly self-assertive individuals seeking "at least a certain amount of immortality".

The quality of historical argument is not of a standard that should be offered to students as a model. Nor is it, fortunately, the author's main concern, and the bulk of the book is given over to a series of descriptive "ekphrastic" analyses of individual paintings which is often ineloquent, sometimes wildly wrong and frequently sensible, and may be of value in encouraging readers, unfashionably, to consider them as narratives.

Stenese painting from its origins to the fifteenth century is similar in character. It is more orthodox as to the overall general picture, though again a reevaluation of the late trecento is urged, very briefly and not persuasively. Both volumes, unusually, devote considerable space to the difficult task of writing about the use of colour. Much is said about the "palette" achieved by individual painters, but the language used is not sufficiently developed to convey a great deal to general readers, who might perhaps have been better served by an account of the cost and availability of particular colours and the iconographic conventions which in part resulted from them. Such knowledge is indispensable for a full appreciation of, say, Christ in Duccio's "Maestà".

The black-and-white illustrations are generally of high quality and there are extensive and useful bibliographical notes.

Helen Philon's *Early Islamic Ceramics from the Beni Muezzin Athens (376p)*. Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications/Philip Wilson Publishers. £55. 0 85667 098 7 is the first volume in the Beni Muezzin's catalogue of Islamic Art. The period covered is from the ninth century to the late thirteenth century. Of the 2,000 examples of Islamic ceramics of this period collected by Helen Philon, 648 were chosen for publication. Helen Philon has arranged the fragments and complete vessels typologically irrespective of their place of discovery. The pieces are all illustrated (there are 1,416 black-and-white illustrations and fifty-two in colour) and there are drawings showing the profiles of the original vessels where these can be told from the remaining shards. The standard of reproduction is high and the clarity with which the volume has been designed will make this book a valuable publication.

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A portrait by John Mather Hamilton of the famous physicist John Tyndall (1820-1893). Fellow of the Royal Society (1852) and the Society's Rumford Medallist in 1864 for his study of the action of gases and vapours on radiant heat. From The Royal Society Catalogue of Portraits reviewed opposite.

Dating the developments

Ronald Pickvance

JAN HULSKER:
*The Complete Van Gogh
 Paintings, Drawings, Sketches.*
 2170 illustrations, including 40 in colour.
 498 pp. Phaidon, £45.
 0 7148 2028 8

If all Van Gogh's paintings and drawings were somehow to disappear, his letters would still remain compulsive reading, and we would have a faint record of all the lost paintings and drawings in the many sketches given of them there. Yet those letters, though translated into many languages, are not yet fully collected, despite the so-called *Complete Letters* published in the late 1950s. There is still the need to arrange them in correct chronological sequence and to date each letter as precisely as possible. (Van Gogh rarely dated his letters, and the envelopes have disappeared.) One Dutch devotee of Van Gogh, Jan Hulsker, has spent the past twenty-five years in this formidable task, and his patient researches have considerably increased our knowledge of Van Gogh the writer.

Even with this achievement, and his service on the Dutch committee of scholars who prepared the third edition (1970) of De la Faille's pioneering *catalogue raisonné* of Van Gogh's paintings and drawings, Dr Hulsker has found time for the ambitious project of producing a complete chronology of all the surviving paintings, drawings and sketches.

Van Gogh produced approximately 850 paintings, 850 drawings, and wrote about 800 letters. In addition he made more than 200 sketches in those letters, while an unknown quantity of sketchbook drawings exist—some, indeed, are already known from dismembered pages, and parts of others have been published. De la Faille, in his catalogue, treated the paintings and drawings separately (but included the sketches in letters), and catalogued each period by dividing the works into those which he identified with descriptions or sketches in the letters, and those not so documented. The result was a discontinuous and incomplete chronology. In the various editions of the letters, not all the sketches have been reproduced.

In Hulsker's new book (a translation of the Dutch edition first published in 1977), the gaps are immediately obvious. Van Gogh's development can now be grasped as an organic whole. The sketching of the "Potato Eaters" can now be seen. The subtle interplay between painting and drawing in St. Rémy

and Auvers are easily observed. The result is a catalogue of 2,126 works, each illustrated in black-and-white, with an accompanying text, which is part biography, part quotation from letters, part account of Van Gogh's stylistic development.

But does it really present "the complete Van Gogh"? Hulsker admits that his aim was "to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of Vincent Van Gogh's path as an artist", with illustrations of "virtually all his drawings and paintings". So not everything is here. Indeed, there are deliberate editorial exclusions: there is no attempt to assemble works done before April 1881—that is to say, before Etten. The juvenilia, the first drawings in the Borinage, the first studies in Brussels, are excluded. Moreover, other sheets, numbered by De la Faille, are excluded because they "show only the unfinished first draft of a drawing or a few barely decipherable scribbles". Still other works are rejected by Hulsker as not authentic, even though some of them were included in the 1970 edition of De la Faille's catalogue. It would have been useful to have had these listed in a footnote. Hulsker has "added a few works that have since come to light and have been identified as authentic" but, again, which are they? Finally, he has added a number of hitherto unpublished drawings from a Brabant sketchbook. What about other sketchbooks from other periods?

In fact, the book falls considerably short of its title's major implication—that all Van Gogh's works are here brought together. But perhaps it is "complete" in another sense, as the work of reference? The individual entries give title, De la Faille number, medium, size and owner, but not reference to the letters, nor provenance, nor exhibition history. For this information, the interested reader must return to De la Faille.

Text and illustrations are arranged by chronological sequence of places from Etten to Auvers. Sometimes the text lags irritatingly behind the illustrations; it is often too biographical and literary—there are "unnecessary quotations from letters, and excessive reliance, in the Paris chapter, on secondary sources like Hartt and Gernsheim."

There is a concordance of De la Faille and Hulsker numbers, but no index of collectors, past or present. There is a surprisingly high percentage of works whose location is unknown, not necessarily through any fault of Hulsker; in some instances, however, he has not brought his lists up to date; the early Etten drawing of a marsh (no. 8) has been in the National Gallery of Canada since 1968;

the drawing, "Sorrow" (no. 130) is in the Walsall Art Gallery and the drawing of a Montmartre windmill (no. 1185) is in the Phillips Collection, Washington.

There is one tantalizing question: what was Van Gogh's last painting? There was a time when it was thought to be "Crows over a Wheatfield". The turbulent, cataclysmic landscape, with its startling spatial disruptions, its agitated brushstrokes and the sombre and haunting presence of crows, was construed as a clear reflection of the inner torment which led to the painter's suicide. But a more attentive perusal of the letters would seem to show that "Crows over a Wheatfield" was painted almost three weeks before Van Gogh's death. A more objective viewing of the painting vis à vis its motif and format—a double square—may lessen the sense of torment.

A case has also been made for considering "Daubigny's Garden" as the last painting, (also a double-square format). It is sketched in Van Gogh's last book to historians and to collectors. Until now the history of the British medal after the end of the period covered in *Medallist Illustrations of British History to the death of George III* has been only fitfully illuminated in tentative requests such as H. Gruber's *British Personal Medals after 1760* and M. H. Grant's list of *British Medals 1760-1937*. As a result, medallist material has remained largely inaccessible to non-specialists and even the most dedicated students and collectors have remained uncomfortably ignorant about the circumstances in which particular pieces were issued.

Brown's book does much to right this state of affairs. It is not and would not claim to be a true continuation of *Medallist Illustrations* since, for quite understandable reasons, he has felt able to include less than half of the medals produced during the period and to illustrate less than a quarter of those included. Despite this, the resulting selection of 1,755 medals will be valuable, not only to those interested in medals for their own sake, but also to students of the period in almost any field. Even after the author's decision to exclude most medals of individuals not mentioned in the DNB, his work still includes over one thousand portraits, scarcely more than a tenth of which are listed in the National Portrait Gallery's recent *Dictionary of British Portraiture*. The catalogue also informs us in which public collections they are to be found, although it should be noted that many more of them are in the British Museum than Brown indicates.

Medals, of course, have two sides and their reverses, like their obverses, provide a reflection of contemporary life which has

ART

Fellows in their finery

By Peter Greenham

NORMAN H. ROBINSON:
The Royal Society Catalogue of Portraits
 343pp. The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. £25.
 0 85403 136 7

Painting a portrait can bring out the best in an artist: look at what Sir Richard Burton did for Lord Leighton, or Charles Keene for himself. One of the memorable possessions of the Royal Society is a portrait of Richard Price by Benjamin West, the American who was twice President of the Royal Academy. It is hard to believe that it is by the man who painted the lofty, vacuous imitation of Titian in the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy. The paint is dry and spare, there is no sumptuous fusion, no flattery, no pose; but a fustian doll, sliding out of the frame and slipping past the bookcase which is meant to arrest him. The skin is drawn tight over the bones; the vivacity and strength of the face could make him a subject fit for a novel. And of course the wig looks as if it could be taken off and put on again.

So do all the wigs in the modest portraits by the lesser-known painters, for instance the fine Martin Chamberlain of Samuel Chandler, or Paul Smeaton by somebody whom the wigs in the grander portraits of Sir Godfrey Kneller and Sir Peter Lely are like rich extensions of the sitter's hair. Perhaps that is the reason why it is hard to guess what they are like; for their wigs make them all benign and opulent, with the smallest of mouths and the noblest of pouches under the eyes; brows arched or gathered, as if pondering what it was that made them undertake to spend so

many hours in the company of a man unused to polite conversation. The Lawrences, like the Knellers, might be of soldiers and statesmen; the sitters are content, their coats are thrown heroically open. But for the cheerful, unworried Fellows the lesser-known artist does best.

Learned societies made little use of Reynolds or Gainsborough or Sargent. Blenheim Palace was the nearest Sargent got with his brushes to a university. No doubt the members of the Royal Society discussed the merits of one painter and another before choosing. It is usually done by little committees which come and sit uneasily in the painter's studio while he as uneasily drags out his canvases, unwilling to confess that the only one they like was done thirty years ago; both parties wondering with what sort of grace they could bring the meeting to a close. Perhaps the fashionable artist was not only too dear, but was too easy in his manner. Yet however far away the artist is from courts and galleries, the change of style hit upon by his betters will soon affect him.

The difference between the earlier portraits at the Royal Society (not the very earliest) and the later shows what the artist—or the patron—has lost and what he has gained. Two hundred years ago, a tradition was still in use which enabled an artist to dispose the head and the two hands in a satisfying pattern. The Victorians had intimations of loss; you only have to look from Lely's Lord Brouncker, so beautifully composed that he must have used some rule to thumb, as the architects did, to John Collier's clumsy and resolute display of the hands in relation to the face may seem in the later portraits and especially the latest, even ones as considered as Gerald Kelly's, to be haphazard; but there is the refreshment that comes from paint richly put on: the freedom which the Victorians often

achieved in their sketches and were at pains to smooth and smother in their pictures for exhibition.

With the richer paint, the more active brush, darting and dipping along the folds and piling up its trophies, goes a more fleshy substance as well as a sense of intimacy. In contrast to the glances of a man who knows his place in society goes a certain inward look, as if the sitters were more on their own, and more on their guard, sometimes indeed more of their dignity. They do not smile much. Scientists have a frank regard, not deprecatory of themselves, but not boastful (though two of the frankest and most modest of the Fellows turn out to be clergymen elected for some unscientific reason). They have, too, an innocence, which the professional portrait painter like Sir Thomas Lawrence supplants with looks of heroic affability, not least in the one of Sir Humphrey Davy: a splendid declamation, as it were, instead of a confidence, delivered with the other kind of confidence which came from doing justice to such splendid figures as Plus VII and Cardinal Consalvi, the memory of whom puts these portraits of the Royal Society in the shade, a calm and honourable place.

The Royal Society's Librarian has perhaps unintentionally chosen the colour reproductions in such a way that this book underlines the superiority of the eighteenth-century portraits. The colours are more brilliant than the originals because they were photographed under a much stronger light than Carlton House Terrace admits. It is clear that the paintings are well cared for there. The notes on the Fellows are full but concise; taken altogether they make up a short history of scientific progress. To have had a note on the portrait painter would no doubt have been too much. One of the best portraits is by John McCulloch Hamilton. Who was he? What else did Fiddes-Watt paint, besides the fine portrait of J. J. Thomson?

History in the round

By Mark P. Jones

LAURENCE BROWN:
A Catalogue of British Historical Medals
 Volume I, 1760-1837
 469pp. 406 illustrations. Seaby Publications. £45.
 0 900652 56 X

Laurence Brown's *A Catalogue of British Historical Medals* is one of those rare publications that open up a whole new field both to historians and to collectors. Until now the history of the British medal after the end of the period covered in *Medallist Illustrations of British History to the death of George III* has been only fitfully illuminated in tentative requests such as H. Gruber's *British Personal Medals after 1760* and M. H. Grant's list of *British Medals 1760-1937*. As a result, medallist material has remained largely inaccessible to non-specialists and even the most dedicated students and collectors have remained uncomfortably ignorant about the circumstances in which particular pieces were issued.

Brown's book does much to right this state of affairs. It is not and would not claim to be a true continuation of *Medallist Illustrations* since, for quite understandable reasons, he has felt able to include less than half of the medals produced during the period and to illustrate less than a quarter of those included. Despite this, the resulting selection of 1,755 medals will be valuable, not only to those interested in medals for their own sake, but also to students of the period in almost any field. Even after the author's decision to exclude most medals of individuals not mentioned in the DNB, his work still includes over one thousand portraits, scarcely more than a tenth of which are listed in the National Portrait Gallery's recent *Dictionary of British Portraiture*. The catalogue also informs us in which public collections they are to be found, although it should be noted that many more of them are in the British Museum than Brown indicates.

Medals, of course, have two sides and their reverses, like their obverses, provide a reflection of contemporary life which has

a documentary as well as an illustrative value. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as now, medals recorded the enormous popular interest in great formal occasions, from royal weddings to the funerals of great public figures. But, along with political tokens (which are unfortunately largely excluded) they also fulfilled a role similar to that now occupied by badges, providing an instant comment on the issues of the day. As such they give us fascinating evidence of public reaction to contemporary events. Some of this, like the extent of medallist response to the French Revolution or to the campaign for parliamentary reform, is predictable. But the total absence of response to other great events, such as the American War of Independence, when compared to the enthusiasm shown on relatively obscure occasions, such as the capture of Saint Eustatius or George III's recovery from illness in 1789 can be surprising. The excellent historical notes which follow each entry are of the greatest use, explaining not only the context in which medals were issued, but also, where possible, how they were marketed, so making it possible to form some idea about the sort and size of public to which such pieces appealed.

With the help of this book it is possible not only to relate particular medals to particular events but also, for the first time, to see how the role of medals changed over the period. In question. Early in George III's reign they ceased to be considered as official art; even when, as in 1789 or during the Jubilee celebrations of 1809-10, large numbers of medals of the King did appear, they were almost invariably the product of private initiative. Even the great events of the Napoleonic period failed to change this situation and it was left to an adventurer called Mudie to produce a series of "National Medals" in 1820 which were intended to rival the great official Napoleonic series issued in France under the direction of Vivant Denon.

Official neglect, however, failed to drive the medal into decline. On the contrary, popular demand was such that annual production in the 1830s was five times that in the 1760s. Such an increase naturally provided increased opportunities for medallists. For the first time Gruber's assertion,

in the introduction to *Medallist Illustrations*, that "the history of English medallists is in a great degree the history of the medallists of other countries" ceases to hold good. Art historians concerned with the period may be surprised to discover a whole school of artists, competent in the production both of portraits and of figure compositions, whose names are scarcely known outside the covers of Forster's *Biographical Dictionary of Medallists*, and a few such as William Wyon or Benedetto Pistrucci, whose work deserves to be much better known. Unfortunately Mr Brown shows little interest in this side of medallist history.

The decision not to record the signatures on medals, combined with an almost total absence of discussion of the reasons for attributing a particular medal to a particular artist, makes it hard for the reader to know how far to accept the catalogue's statements about authorship. Entry No 1742, for example, attributes a medal for Princess Victoria's majority to W. H. Holbrook and William Wyon. Since the piece is not illustrated the reader can have no idea why this should be so, unless, that is, he can get hold of an example of the medal in which case he will see that it is signed W. W. He still could not be certain that this is the basis for the attribution, but if it is, it is a bad one. The signature is more likely to be that of William Woodhouse than of William Wyon, who created another and far superior medal for the same occasion which has unfortunately been omitted from the catalogue.

Such minor failings should not, however, be allowed to obscure the real magnitude of Laurence Brown's achievement and certainly will not stop it becoming a bible for collectors and the basis for all future research on British medals of this period.

Europe and America from the Colonial Era to today by Victoria Kloss Ball (442pp). Chichester: John Wiley. £25.00. 0 471 05161 6 is the second of two volumes on Architecture and Interior Design. The first volume dealt with the subject up to seventeenth-century European Baroque. The second volume continues the examination, focusing on a number of historic buildings and contents and describing the characteristic styles of the seventeenth-century colonization in America.

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Seeing as and in

By Michael Podro

RICHARD WOLLEHEIM:
Art and Its Objects
Second Edition
With Six Supplementary Essays
270pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50
0 521 22498 0

Richard Wollheim's *Art and Its Objects* was first published in 1968. This second edition fortunately leaves the original text intact, while continuing some of its main arguments in six supplementary essays. It was a central thesis of Wollheim's, now considerably developed, that we should not allow the conception of a work of art to be radically divorced from the standard properties of the physical object with which it was associated. Although some adjustment of those standard properties is involved in regarding something as a work of art, this should not lead us to posit a ghost or ideal construct behind the physically present work, whether that work is an object like a painting, or an event like the performance of a piece of music.

The pressures to construct such ideal entities have been many. One central problem has been the *prima facie* conflict between, for instance, seeing the depth in a still-life painting and recognizing that the canvas is flat, or between perceiving the vitality of Donatello's "St George", and recognizing the fact that it is made of inert marble. And from this conflict arose the problem of how we could give an account of the representational and expressive properties which related them to the standard literal properties of the objects.

Wollheim gave an analysis of this problem in terms of our general capacity to see representationally, (which Leonardo invoked when he recommended looking at damp or uneven walls for suggestions of forms for battle-scenes and landscapes), with the additional requirement that the forms be deliberately produced to elicit such seeing. Wollheim has now revised and elaborated the notion of representational seeing, for which he adopted the Wittgensteinian expression of "seeing-as", by distinguishing two senses that might be given to that expression, one being termed "seeing as", the other "seeing in". Underlying the difference between the two are what he calls two different "projects" for perception: *seeing as* is governed by curiosity about what is really there, or how what is really there may be altered into a variant of itself, whereas *seeing in* exploits what is present in order to conjure up something that is not, and so is dissociated from concern with what is really there.

Stately courts

By David Watkin

ALAN C. COOK:
From the Foundation to Gilbert Scott
A History of the Buildings of St John's College, Cambridge 1511 to 1885.
183pp. St John's College, Cambridge. £12.
0 9501085 37

How many people, confronted with a book called *From Renascence to Crisp*, would be able to guess that its subject-matter was the architectural history of St John's College from 1883 to 1978? Anyone who had read it would certainly be eager for Volume 2, which has now appeared under a more comprehensible title. This painstakingly documented study is the product of a tradition of architectural history in Cambridge which reaches back to the mid-eighteenth century. The overwhelming presence in the small university town of one of the great late medieval buildings of Europe, King's College Chapel, encouraged the first-hand study of medieval architecture in Cambridge, from Cole and Eady in the 1750s through Wilkins to Whewell, Willis and J.C. Scott junior in the late nineteenth century. *Chapel's Account of King's College* (1769) is an early attempt to relate documentary evidence to examination of the surviving fabric, even to the point of publishing the medieval building's indentures. Though appearing under

An implication of this difference is that in the case of "seeing as", the shape of a horse, say, can be correlated with a specific part of a painted surface, while it rules out, for instance, seeing the still emerging crowd half-concealed behind a hill in the painting, or a woman reading a letter or being surprised, for such events could not be correlated with a particular piece of the surface. The figure of the woman reading could be so correlated, but not the fact that she is reading or moving. "Seeing in", by contrast, can accommodate such examples. "Seeing as" implies that there are mutually exclusive ways of seeing the object (as canyons or as horse, but not both at the same time), whereas "seeing in" allows the seeing of both sets of properties (canyons and horse), and is thus "twofold" seeing.

For each of these reasons "seeing in" is held to provide the better account of representational seeing. Wollheim acknowledges that the project of "seeing in" must be reconciled with the scrutiny of what is really there. The artist "seeks an ever more intimate rapport between the two experiences, but how it is to be described is a challenge to phenomenological acuity which I cannot think low to meet". If this returns us to the initial problem of the expressive or representational seeing relevant to art, it does so with greatly enhanced clarity.

In other supplementary essays Wollheim argues against positions which would restrict the range of legitimate art criticism. Here it is not so much the physical object that is being saved as the historical object, the work as part of history. Against the view of criticism which insists upon limiting itself to immediately perceptible properties of the work, and disregarding intentions behind the work, he argues that there is no firm criterion for distinguishing immediately perceptible properties. When we know that Titian, in his altarpiece of "St Peter Martyr", was intending to outdo the dramatic effects of Forde-nune, we may perceive new properties in Titian's design. But Wollheim then makes a further, and less expected, move: even if there is no direct effect upon our observation of the particular work, further knowledge may still have a critical role. To learn that a painting which we had thought the work of the master himself was by a pupil of Rembrandt need not lead us to perceive it differently, and yet it may still be critically important. For it may show us something about the nature of art - perhaps how one man can work in the creative light of another - and such general considerations are part of our critical education.

Throughout both the original edition and these new essays, one is aware of the demand made by art on philosophy, and the brilliant restructuring of concepts which engage with and expand intuition.

the name of the chapel clerk, it was written with the assistance of the bursar, an able antiquary. The book at present under review, written by a former bursar of St John's College, is thus in a direct line of descent from Malden's guidebook.

The stately courts of St John's from the heraldic gateway of 1511 to Scott's noble chapel of 1862 - well documented as college buildings frequently are - afford rich opportunities for the serious architectural historian. Mr. Cook draws on building accounts, annual rentals, and Conclusion Books of the governing body, to paint an intimate picture not only of the actual fabric but also of the debates about the size and siting of new buildings, the appeals for benefactions and the adoption of existing buildings for new purposes. The college archives also contain architectural drawings of the 1820s for the New Court by Rickman, Mead and Browne, none of which are reproduced. Indeed, inadequate illustration is the only drawback to this admirable study.

"Someone put it that modern architecture in the West began with housing, whereas in Japan it began with banks, city-halls, museums and the single house."

Chris Hawes, in *The New Japanese House* (1979), Clarendon, £15. 0 246 11267 0, captures about Japan and its buildings, and uncovers some of the complex cultural influences at work in the Japanese house, especially the ritual, ceremonial side of domestic life.



This disturbing woodcut, reproduced by courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, is one of fifty-six that Kandinsky made to accompany his collection of thirty-eight poems Klänge, which was first published by Piper Verlag of Munich in 1912. An original version of Klänge containing seven poems in Russian was intended for publication by the sculptor Vladimir Iezobsky but the book never materialized. Yale University Press are publishing in May the first complete English version of Klänge, Souffles (£18.90 paperback, £7.50), which is translated with an introduction by Elizabeth R. Napier. The original German text of the poems is included in the book. Klänge was written during a seminal period in Kandinsky's career during which his work was moving toward abstraction. Its woodcuts vary from early representational Jugendstil-inspired designs to abstract vignettes. This particular example with its barest of outlines of human forms and its bleak suggestion of landscape comes between these two extremes.

The maternal muse

By John Forrester

PETER FULLER:
Art and Psychoanalysis
250pp. Writers and Readers Publishing
Cooperative. £2.95.
0 906495 24 5

Peter Fuller maintains that psychoanalysis can offer us major insight into the "biological meaning" - whatever that might be - of art. In striving to do so, *Art and Psychoanalysis* not only reflects but also recapitulates theoretical developments since Freud. Its first essay is a critical examination of Freud's "The Moses of Michelangelo". The second, a fascinating piece of historical reconstruction and cultural speculation, deals with the theme of fragmentation and bodily unity so central to Kleinian theory, as exemplified by the Venus de Milo. Fuller turns in his third and fourth essays to modernism and abstract art, trying to demonstrate how the new conception (found in the work of Winnicott, Fairbairn and Milner) of the mother-infant relationship and of the "space" that develops between "mother" and child, can illuminate our understanding of these forms.

One of Fuller's many polemical contentions is that "Freudian" psychoanalysis is excessively rationalistic and patriarchal, both as a psychology and as a basis for aesthetic theory. He argues that "The Moses of Michelangelo" is an extreme example of this tendency: Freud regresses back to the scientific ideal of his student days - and, in particular, to the objective techniques of aesthetic interpretation propounded by his teacher Ernst Brücke and by the Italian connoisseur, Morelli. Fuller's polemic is restricted to the "rationalistic" side of Freud, to the objectivist tradition of nineteenth-century aesthetics, and to its recent appropriation in the guise of Althusserian critical theory. But he allies himself with the newer reality of scientism: the ambitious claims of Sebastianism Tinpanaro to found historical materialism on the biological "gyres" that limit and determine human existence. For Fuller, art is rooted in a common biological experience: the "ontological" of the human body, and aspects of its anatomy which give rise to transcendent "sculptural elements which... pertain to areas of the experience of reality which are common to all those who have human bodies". However, it is unclear what he means by biology (ethology or its modern variants? What about neurophysiology?) and what he thinks it can offer as a firm material foundation. Happily, the British psychoanalytical school seems to give him

the theoretical means with which to fill the gap left by his consistent vagueness as to the exact nature of the biology upon which aesthetics rests.

The artistic elements of interest to Fuller are those concerned with space and the human form. These converge conveniently with two of the major themes that have preoccupied British analysts following in the footsteps of Mrs Klein: the spatial expulsion and incorporation of bodily elements and the mother's body with which the crafting of the inner world takes place. With Winnicott, Fairbairn and Milner, the notion of a "potential space" between self and mother, between embryonic ego and environment, becomes of crucial importance in the construction of reality, and it is this potential space which Fuller perceives as the new arena of modernist artistic creativity, from Cézanne to Robert Rauschenberg - what he calls "the extension into an occluded area of experience". In arguing this case, Fuller traverses a range of topics, works of art, and personal experiences: the cold white peaks of aesthetic experience of Clive Bell; the subtle and sensitive self-description of Marion Milner's *On Not Being Able to Paint*; his encounter with the modern American Colour-Field artist Mark Rothko.

Whatever topic he touches, Fuller confesses that his aim is to convert an avowedly personal judgment into an objective explanation of the "good" and the "empty". We find that "good" art not only stems from the successful reparative activity of the subject towards its "mailed" objects (breast, mother, canvas, marble, art-object), but also from the subjective apathy experiences involved in the separation of the infant from the mother - in other words, from the construction of space. In repudiating the old psychoanalytic reductions, with their trite symbolic decodings, Fuller wishes to relocate the centre of psychoanalytic concern around "feelings". Whatever is thought, whatever is expressible in words, automatically becomes suspect, since it cannot pertain directly to the early, all-important pre-verbal period of infancy. Art, particularly modern art, thus gives us a privileged access to these early experiences and primary feelings, a reference to which will also allow the connection to a materialist theory of art, since they are pre-verbal, pre-discursive, and in direct, unmediated relation to the "matter" of biology.

It is not at all clear, however, that psychoanalysis offers a licence to anyone wishing to stress the primacy and autonomy of the feelings against the claims to "determination by the structure". One of Freud's most important findings was that

the feelings are themselves the products of transformation over time (psyche, for instance, is derived from somatic impulses). In addition, Freud emphasized ideas rather than feelings; for him the feeling of unity, of a bond (the "oceanic feeling"), is more like an *ideal* constructed out of the fragments of the early stages of the ego's development than a feeling - and the derivative ideal of the social bond is constructed out of defensive necessity. In contrast, the modern British school takes the bond as an empirical "given" and a core of the primary needs - the need of the infant for object relations thus amounts to positing a social instinct.

Fuller's rhapsodic celebration of this bond, in its realization in art, and in its conceptual adumbration in object-relations psychoanalysis, may well respond to the opening up of a previously occluded realm of experience. But it is, more strikingly, a glorification of a new ideal of the pristine whole, the pristine pure relation to the mother - a relation that, in his more fulsome moments, Fuller would claim as the only basis for socialism, or for any thought which can repudiate the "givenness" of our reality. The central problem is the silent sliding between the unambiguous bio-sociological mother - the "real" mother - and the fantasy mother (the Mother). If the Mother figures only as a phantasmic figure, as she appears to Klein and Jung, then an idealistic psychoanalysis, and an idealistic aesthetic, becomes once more possible.

It is at this point that Fuller's claims as to the importance of biological foundations for psychoanalysis and for historical materialism *à la* Tinpanaro have to stick. The mother - the "real" mother - and the child's relation to her is the biological foundation of psychoanalysis, and it is also the basis for a theory of needs that transcends a given historical epoch. Without these foundations for his aesthetic criticism, Fuller's analysis will not differ in his framework from the aesthetic separation of Freud, Bell, Bernard Berenson, Fuller argues, a least tried to supply a psychological and neurophysiological foundation for aesthetic appreciation; at least he tried - it was just his bad luck that he picked the wrong one; having been born before the enlightenment brought by the chrysean theories of the primacy of motherhood associations with the British school. Using the notion that psychoanalysis is a "biological theory of meaning", Fuller can supply the foundations without which talk of art might be unrelated to talk of biology. But the talk that returns us to the art object truly enriched by such vague and gratuitous glosses about the "below" of the biology and the "finesse" of feeling?

Very English, very Edwardian

By Colin Amery

RODERICK GRADIDGE:
Dream Houses
247pp. Constable. £12.50.
0 09 46193 0

Architects and architectural historians have discovered the turn of this century with a vengeance. As they reassess the achievements of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain a sense of loving nostalgia comes over them and their aesthetic judgment is overlaid by a warm sense of cosiness and pleasure that is almost sentimental. This cloying enthusiasm for the architecture of the interwar period is understandable when it is seen beside the kind of twentieth-century architecture that has, until now, received the accolades of historians. Many of those currently writing about architecture have decided to look more closely at the decades from 1880 to 1910 because they feel that they represent a period that has been unfairly neglected in the Cadarens rush to promote the acceptance of modernism.

Roderick Gradidge begins his book with a strong, and justified, complaint that the history of English architecture of the last century has been forced into a Prussian corset. The polemics of Pevsner and others prevented the architecture of the more traditional practitioners from being considered seriously. The absence of any serious reference to Lutyens is an example of the way that historians like Pevsner tried to give the history of modern architecture a unity by exclusion. In his introduction Roderick Gradidge points to the folly of looking at C. A. Voysey as a pioneer of modernism - it was as early as 1935 that Voysey wrote in the *Architect's Journal* that he made no claim to anything new.

Because the author of this book is a practising architect and not an art historian his view of buildings is based on a feeling for materials and spaces that arises from his own experience. He is clearly a man who loves houses, and this book is about twenty houses built just before the reign of Edward VII, all of which aspire to a kind of Anglo-Saxon domestic idealism

that is deeply rooted in the English soul. It is a romantic book that struggles to present to the reader a picture of a lost world, in which architect and client and craftsman were united in their vision and in their domestic dreams.

Gradidge is right to include in *Dream Houses* accounts of the painters, illustrators and other craftsmen of the period; architects at this time understood and were nourished by the rest of the arts as they have not been since. The vision of buildings and places of the Edwardian illustrators such as Jessie M. King, Catherine Cameron, and Tolpin Morris, for instance, had an enormous influence on their architect friends, and paintings by Burne Jones were the major influence on the formation of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's architecture. This first part of the book also includes a great deal of reconciling information - for example, that the father of that great craftsman C. R. Ashbee produced an *Index of Forbidden Books* that is the most "important source book of pre-twentieth-century obscurity", although Gradidge does not discuss the effect that this material lying around the Ashbee house had on the young designer.

It was magazines like *The Studio* and *Country Life* that were the propagandists for the dream houses, *Country Life* in particular. Edward Hudson, the proprietor, became the great patron of Edwin Lutyens. His admiration for the architect knew no bounds - when he attended the opening of Lutyens's Viceroy's House in New Delhi he wandered around saying, "poor old Christopher Wren, he could never have done this". The full effect of *Country Life* on the development of English architecture of the first thirty years of this century has not yet been fully assessed by historians. It had an enormous influence, particularly in the way that the *Country Life* photographers saw both the interiors of houses and their gardens. It would be interesting to know how far they were, for example, influenced by the Dutch interiors of the seventeenth century and the view of landscape of the English water colourists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Bullers Wood, near Bromley, is the first house to receive Gradidge's appraisal. It was built by Ernest Newton, exactly the sort of minor Edwardian architect that the

Modern Movement has taught us to despise - he was after all a neo-Georgian. Mr Gradidge writes that most architects, suffering from megalomania, force their clients to adopt ideas that are far from what they really want to build. But not so with Ernest Newton - he simply gave the client just what he needed and liked. It is however nonsense to say that the empirical approach to architecture characterized by Newton's work "is almost unknown to architecture anywhere in the world, before or after this date". This book is frequently marred by overstatements of this kind.

Other architects surveyed in *Dream Houses* include E. S. Prior, Lethaby, Voysey, Lutyens, Gimson, Baillie Scott, and all receive penetrating and original analysis. Gradidge is a highly subjective writer, which makes him both interesting and infuriating to read. No one can accuse him of rehearsing received opinions. He is good on Lutyens and he seems to share Gertrude Jekyll's enthusiasm for the actual processes of building. Lengthy quotations from Miss Jekyll's own description of Munstead Wood are models of descriptive writing about building. It is hard to understand how those historians who love the work of Edwin Lutyens, and this author is one of them, can be equally enthusiastic about the work of Herbert Baker - although Gradidge is aware of the weaknesses of Baker's curious enthusiasm for superficial symbolism. But he points out that Baker's Grootte Schuur in Cape Town, built for Cecil Rhodes, reveals the beginnings of Cape Dutch Revival to have been rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement.

Gradidge's descriptions of buildings are fresh and often eye-opening. The Epilogue, on the other hand, which gives an account of Elgar's composition of the *Enigma Variations*, is both sentimental and unconvincing. Lutyens and Elgar may have shared an enthusiasm for the splendours of the Empire, but it was not a jingoistic romance, rather an awareness that out of ordered government comes the freedom for the human spirit to grow. Still, *Dream Houses* is a provocative, if inconclusive book, and to be recommended as a highly personal vision of a lost dream world. It is extremely well illustrated with photographs, drawings and plans.

Very rugged, very rubbly

By David Walker

PETER SAVAGE:
Lorimer and the Edinburgh Craft Designers
191pp. 317 illustrations and 127 plans plus 6 colour plates.
Edinburgh: Paul Harris. £25.
0 904305 39 1

Since Peter Savage allows Lorimer to tell most of the story himself this book is in large part a self-portrait, and an uncommonly vivid one, made possible by the survival of his letters to the Australian architect R. S. Dods for whom he chronicled his life, work and times with an unbridled frankness he could not have risked to any correspondent from nearer home. They vividly reveal not only his feeling for "the poetry of life" and his will to work and get work; but many glimpses of his contemporaries, which range from the great art collector Sir William Burrell on his travels in search of new treasures, to other architects like Shaw, Clarke, and Hermann Muthusius who invited him to dinner for a preview of the photographs of *Der Englische Hausr* such was his self-conception at thirty-six that he could write "later, a good, steady second look". "I don't think in viewing the whole collection that I once said to myself, now there's a thing I must use up straight".

For the last half-century Lorimer's image has been one fashioned by Christopher Hussey in 1931 in *The Work of Sir Robert Lorimer* (still valuable as a large-scale picture book) which presented him almost exclusively as the Scottish counterpart to the grander and of Lutyens's domestic practices, a purveyor of lavish restorations, and large Scots baronial houses in the Bryce-Wardrop tradition, suitably updated to the softer hues of ran-

dom rubble and Scots slate with gardens in the manner of Gertrude Jekyll. Savage shows us that these houses represent only a third of Lorimer's work - arguably not the most significant third. He reveals that Lorimer was not so much a follower of Bodley as of J. M. MacLaren and his successors Dunn and Watson for whom he deserted Bodley within a year in order to develop their roughest vernacular revival (which they had pioneered at Glenlyon in 1889-91) into his "Colinton cottage" style of 1893 onwards. This comprised low proportioned houses, synthesized from English and Scottish traditions, similar in size to Voysey's and well above that of them stylistically even if not quite so demonstratively original, in outline. They steadily grew in size and sophistication. Eventually they reached such heights or perhaps one should say lengths, as *Waykide*, St Andrews (1901) and Mary Knowe, North Berwick (1902), the cleverly balanced asymmetrical roofs and subtly bell-shaped gables of which show how skillfully he could compose even the largest houses without recourse to the historicist detail with which his name has come to be associated. Indeed even his most elaborate baronial houses, Rowallan (1902), and Ardinkyles (1906), were simpler in conception than in execution, the dark variegated rubble work which gives them their present character being originally intended for a unifying coat of white roughcast. He restores to Lorimer his place, both as architect and as designer, in the British rather than a merely Scottish context. Illustrates virtually all his best work with well-chosen illustrations and provides comprehensive catalogues not only of his works but the more important of his associates, assistants and craftsmen with biographical information not easily available elsewhere. For such a book a few misprints can surely be forgiven; it may not rank among the largest of modern British architectural biographies, but it is certainly among the very best.

Savage similarly corrects the historical perspective on Lorimer's furniture, the importance of which has long been forgotten since Hussey illustrated only the grander pieces - generally later examples of his simplified post-1896 Louis XV manner - omitting entirely the marvellously simple, modern chests, settles and dressers of the early to mid-1890s with their inland fronts and friezes of softly romantic formalized landscapes, surely among the very best British furniture of its date. It secured his election, without application, to the Art Workers' Guild in 1897. "Suppose I ought to be proud to be associated with C. R. Ashbee, Voysey, etc." he wrote to Dods.

Lorimer and the Edinburgh Craft Designers is altogether a remarkable book. It restores to Lorimer his place, both as architect and as designer, in the British rather than a merely Scottish context. Illustrates virtually all his best work with well-chosen illustrations and provides comprehensive catalogues not only of his works but the more important of his associates, assistants and craftsmen with biographical information not easily available elsewhere. For such a book a few misprints can surely be forgiven; it may not rank among the largest of modern British architectural biographies, but it is certainly among the very best.

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Infinitely Irish

By Patricia Craig

BEN FORKNER (Editor)
Modern Irish Short Stories
Preface by Anthony Burgess
557pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.
0 7181 1983 5

Only last year, the Bodley Head brought out a collection of Irish stories edited by David Marcus, and before that several other publishing houses, including Sphere, Quartet and Wolfhound Press, had issued similar anthologies (to say nothing of the Poolbeg Press's collections of stories by individual authors). Now that Michael Joseph has added a new selection to the list, we might begin to wonder how many volumes of Irish stories the market can hold.

Fortunately, the possibilities for rearrangement are endless. Only one story, Mary Lavin's interesting "Happiness", is duplicated in the two most recent collections, although the same authors, by and large, appear in both. Younger Irish writers get a better showing in the Bodley Head book, which ends with Neil Jordan (born in 1951), and includes Maureen Tracey, Julia O'Faolain and Kate Cusack. O'Brien: Ben Forkner's collection stops at John McCann (born in 1934). On the other hand, the Michael Joseph volume has W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge instead of the facetious Ulsterman Lynn Doyle (author of *The Ballygullion Bus*), which seems a satisfactory replacement.

Yeats is represented by "The Twisting of the Rope" from his *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (revised in 1904); we remember his lines, written much later: "And I myself created Hanrahan/And sent him back drunk or sober through the dawn". Drunk or sober, the poet Hanrahan—a type of folk hero derived from Yeats's memories of old tales he heard in Co Sligo, and the Gaelic tales of Connacht collected in the 1880s by Douglas Hyde—must be given his head, or be thwarted by trickery, Gaelic poets traditionally possessing malevolent powers. There is about this story the kind of naive vigour that marked the earliest phase of the Literary Revival. The Synge piece, too ("An Autumn Night in the Hills"), written in 1903 before the author acquired the full-blown theatrical manner that made him famous, is impressively sombre and muted in style.

Yeats's literary folktales and Synge's autobiographical essays are, of course, outside the tradition of the short story proper, which begins in Ireland with George Moore's collection *An Unfinished Field* (1903). Moore and Joyce, according to Ben Forkner's detailed and conscientious introduction, "can... be credited with transforming the Irish story into a modern art"; Joyce's *Dubliners* (the stories written between 1904 and 1907) set the standard by which all subsequent exercises in Irish realism might be assessed. "The Dead" is Forkner's choice for the book.

Joyce's celebrated intention was "to write a chapter of the moral history of my country" with Dublin pinpointed as the "centre of paralysis"; a similar impulse, in a less subtle form, determined George Moore's repudiation of the heroic/romantic view of Irish peasant life. Moore's terrible parishes of the West (exemplified in "Homelessness"), Forkner's choice here) are, priest-ridden and god-forsaken, and show all the lascivious offices of Catholic provincial lassitude. As an antidote to this, we have the comic Ireland of Sonjivella and Rose ("Poison d'Avril" [that would translate "Malt" if unpunctuated, thank]), a natural location for the contretemps and the mock disaster, and inescapably recalling Joyce's sour observation that Ireland was "destined by God to be the everlasting caricature of the selfish world".

The longest story in the book is Seamus O'Kelly's "The Weaver's Grave", with its decrepit hobnobs engaged in a contest to locate a burial place in an ancient cemetery. O'Kelly brings a mock-epic exuberance to this tale of belligerence on the verge (literally) of the tomb. Daniel Corkery, the uncoverser of "the Hidden Ireland" (the mysterious territory where, in the seventeenth century, the "native Irish" still lurked; and, more importantly, the indigenous literary tradi-

tions they had inherited) is represented here by the story entitled "Rock-of-the-Mass", about an old farmer who has prospered and moved away from the half-owned spot, the rock where Mass had been celebrated in the Penal Days, on his former mountain land. It's a dispiriting, uneconomical tale of age, obsession, loss and desolation—common themes of the "disgruntled", post-Civil War phase in modern Irish writing, but often presented with more style and distinctiveness than we find here.

James Stephens, who could be intelligently whimsical (as in his best-known work, *The Crock of Gold*), gets into the anthology with an exceptionally bleak and venomous little sketch of a misogynist, "The Blind Man"—"sex-blind", that is; "he could not appreciate women". This is an oddity, very much of its time (1913), somewhat overwrought and tawdry in feeling. With Liam O'Flaherty's "The Pedlar's Revenge" we are back with the hearty, outrageous, conniving countrymen of the West, whose actions always carry the greatest amount of weight, in dramatic terms. Frank O'Connor has a group of them, too, in "The Train"—"Gnarled, wild, with turbulent faces, their ill-cut clothes full of character"—a lively story which effectively satirizes the community spirit.

The novelist Francis Stuart, in an article which appeared in the *Irish Times* in 1976, made a distinction between this type of writing, which he found "comfortable" and "soft-centred" (not altogether justly), and the work of authors like Joyce, Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien, whose literary impulse

was bound up with a powerful critical urge. As well as "The Dead", Forkner includes Beckett's "Dante and the Lobster" and O'Brien's "The Murky's Crown", the latter running caustically true to form with a story which subverts the nationalist cliché about dying for Ireland. To die for Ireland is nothing compared with having been *born* for Ireland—conceived, that is, as your mother kept some Black and Tans occupied while Irish revolutionaries made good their escape. James Plunkett ("A Walk Through the Summer"), with his thesis-writer who found himself "teaching the people their own folk tunes", is, momentarily, in the same mould. Colourful Ireland, to the benefit of every serious writer, is dead and gone.

We can only applaud the subtlety and lucidity of Elizabeth Bowen ("Summer Night", one of the handful of Irish stories she wrote, appears in this volume), the striking narrative energy of Sean O'Faolain, the cool, disturbing sharpness of William Trevor. Only one story, Eugene McCabe's ferocious "Cancer", touches on the present-day conflict in Northern Ireland; and (apart from Flann O'Brien's anecdote) there is nothing at all about the country's past political troubles, no informers or insurgents or internees. We have, instead, those usual non-sectarian groupings in Irish life—the glorious and the glorious, the exhilarating and the deadly, the feckless and the calculating, the spiritual and the spirited, the riproaring and the rancorous. As Anthony Burgess remarks in his engaging preface, "The Irish have always something to write about".

Dingily domestic

By Pat Raine

BARBARA COMYNS
The Vet's Daughter
190pp. Virago. £2.50.
0 86068 163 7

ANTONIA WHITE:
Strangers
173pp. Virago. £2.50.
0 860068 171 8

JANET FRAME:
Faces in the Water
254pp. Women's Press. £2.75.
0 7043 3861 0

The railway arch, the dirty privet hedges, the smells of cabbage and escaping gas: these are among the props Barbara Comyns uses to fix her novel, *The Vet's Daughter* (first published in 1959), in a dingy South London suburb before the First World War. The tone of her first-person narrative is curiously sedate and impassive. Everything that surrounds seventeen-year-old Alice Rowlands is cramped, warped and oppressive, yet she bears her sorry life with unflinching docility and never complains.

The vet, with his dyed black eyebrows and moustache like a music hall villain, is a sour-tempered brute without the least regard for his wife and daughter. Veterinary surgery is perhaps not the most likely occupation for someone so obdurate and degraded as Alice's father, though it's the more disreputable aspects of the profession that are stressed, the vivisectionist's man is a regular caller at the house. The skin of a Great Dane does service for a hearthrug. Diseased and injured animals are kept in the kitchen. There is some covert social comment too. A boy employed by the vet is so ill-fed that he falls greedily on quantities of dog biscuits and raw herring.

The touches of oddness accumulate—when Alice leaves the vet's house, it is to stay with a midwife in Hampshire; she disobeys in herself the oldest effect of all: the story is apparently recounted from beyond the grave. It is impossible not to feel that this is going too far in the search for the macabre. *The Vet's Daughter* is an interesting, unassuming, strangely composed work, with a special kind of talented charm—limited in achievement but valuable as a curiosity.

Antonia White is a novelist who drew deeply on her own experience, so it is not surprising to find her stories reflecting the

same concerns as her novels, with convent school days, marriage disorders and insanity to the fore. The eight stories collected in *Strangers* were written between 1928 and 1964, and they can be read either as trial runs (Hermione Lee in her excellent introduction points out that the 1928 story "The House of Clouds", to give one example, "anticipates the Bethlem section of *Beyond the Glass*", the novel published in 1954) or as so much surplus material, by-products of the narrative compulsion which gave us *Frost in May* (1933) and its sequels.

This is not to disparage Antonia White's stories, only to point out that they are indisputably slighter than her full-length works. All of them make efforts to objectify material which must have been distressingly personal to start with. "The Moment of Truth", which opens with a dream (a convention not exactly in favour at present), contains some sententiousness:

"... Why do you keep dreaming about the past?"
"I can't inhabit the present any more."

"The Shini", however, rises to a distinctive kind of irony: it is a pointed little moral tale about misplaced devotion. It is brisk, too, about that rather suspect sanctity which characterizes many convent schoolgirls for a time, and is then so carelessly discarded. "Aunt Rose's Revenge", set in Vienna in 1918, benefits from the narrator's self-effacement and crisp style. The last story of all, "Surprise Visit", deals with an ex-inmate's foolhardy return to the asylum (now a war museum) where she was incarcerated fifteen years earlier, and her instant relapse into lunacy. We learn from the introduction that it is a true incident, apart from the ending, which is written with a kind of relish that suggests complacency.

The fears, fantasies and desperate confusions of the mad make tedious reading if they are not incorporated in a wider narrative design. Poetic outpourings and pathetic ramblings are equally expurgating. In *Faces in the Water* Janet Frame finally allows her heroine to give vent to a sequence of disordered fancies ("the strangers arrived with seasons and cloth bags filled with lice and red-labelled bottles of poison... it so goes on"). But the novel quickly takes shape as an account of madness, or rather of the treatment of the mad, reflected in sanity. The descent into chaos, as the narrator is moved from an orderly ward to a disorderly one, the brutalization of the medical attendants, the sad delusion of the insane—these are painstakingly observed.

But the documentary approach also makes *Faces in the Water* a hard work—less novel than

Veeringly vulpine

By Paul Taylor

ANN ARENSBERG:
Sister Wolf
210pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £6.95.
0 283 98731 6

Imagine *Northanger Abbey* rewritten by Mrs Radcliffe and you will have some idea of the problems raised by *Sister Wolf*, a first novel by the American writer Ann Arensberg. It is one wonder, an analysis of the over-heated Gothic imagination, or is it the only slightly abashed product of such? Ms Arensberg's prose seems equally unexcited, veering hectorically between passages of acute psychological perceptiveness and stretches of prudently heightened narrative where the only *frisson* induced is one of embarrassment. Her intelligence leaps off every other page, powerful but unreliable.

The story concerns Marit Deym, half-tyro chateauf of the thousand-acre estate in Niles, Massachusetts, left to her by her emigrant Magyar parents, her attempts to turn this estate (against community and legal opposition) into the wild-life reserve of her dreams, and her destructively jealous passion for Gabriel Frankman, a young teacher at the Meyerling Community school for blind adolescents, which backs, conveniently enough, on to the Deym estate. It is the heroine's jealousy upon discovering a photograph of Gabriel's former lover (for whose death he feels indirectly responsible), a jealousy exacerbated when she sees him kissing a pubescent blind girl at the school, that triggers off the tragic sequence of events with which the book closes.

"The novel unfolds like a fairy tale" announces the blurb. More's the pity because, although there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the novel's set-up, Ms Arensberg uses it to arrive at significances which her story has not earned. The fairy tale elements ghoulishly throttle the book's genuinely interesting themes.

Marit and Gabriel are intermittently perceptive studies in the psychology of obsession. We gain insight, through a series of flashbacks, into why Marit trusts even the most savage beasts above any human being ("Marit loved wolves more than any other animal, because they were

the most reclusive and the least valued but she did not try to scale them to her size. They were creatures and she was human, and she cherished the difference more than any likeness"). We also learn why Gabriel lives on red-alert the whole time, desperately needing to expiate, through selfless devotion to the unfortunate, an immense backlog of guilt. This, too, is well done. "His chest", writes Arensberg, "was tight with the press of his humane obligations." What the animals represent to Marit, the blind children represent to him. Both characters distort and exploit the nature of their beloved charges in order to avoid facing up to themselves.

The shrewd reader quickly suspects that these two groups are going to be brought into a somewhat grisly collision. What the novel needs to do is to suggest that such an eventuality has a life outside its stately symbolic appropriateness, whereby the lovers mutually cause the destruction of the things they have clung to. This it fails to do. Arensberg doesn't make Marit love Gabriel at all credible. The scene between them in the corniest Gothic tradition and supremely difficult to visualize. (It's symptomatic that on one occasion, when Marit is playing with the wolves, Gabriel, we are assured, "lost sight of her completely; she was buried under fur".) Marit's jealousy is also very badly done: it is all very well for her to see the top but Arensberg should have related the temptation to sail over with her. There is a particularly unfortunate sequence in which Marit storms to the grave of Gabriel's former lover and tries to tear his body out with her bare hands.

When, in the final stages of the novel, Marit pursues the blind girl to her accidental death in the reserve, the facilities for the scene (and what has preceded it) cancels out its grimly poetic justice. Arensberg leaves too many questions unanswered—we never, for example, ever remotely near to understanding the love of the blind girl's attraction toward Gabriel. Everything is too firmly subservient to the novel's sensationalist symmetries. The jealousy, the chase, the love by which the wolves are wrongly thought to be the cause of the blind girl's death, are wilfully engineered. Arensberg shows that she has genuine insight into the workings of obsession, but she lacks, as yet, the ability to dramatize these insights into a novel that manages to work simultaneously on a realistic and symbolic level.

Religiously running

By James Lasdun

SUSAN TROTTER:
When Your Lover Leaves
215pp. Gollancz. £7.95.
0 575 02905 6

This is one of those bitter-sweet Californian novels that manage to keep you reading very much against your better judgment. The ingredients have a familiar quality: a whimsical, "creative" heroine/narrator called Ronda, who writes stories with titles like "Love" and composes cute little poems on such subjects as herpetology, who suffers terribly at the hands of men, who spends a great deal of time jogging, and whose unrequited love of life leads to some very hints that she may be some kind of latter-day St Francis.

A good dose of authorial irony could have turned this into an entertaining satire on Marin County pretensions, along the lines of Caryl Chessman's *The Serail*, but this author does not appear to have a very well-developed sense of the ridiculous, and she is evidently too close to her heroine to perceive anything silly in even her most preposterous statements:

"You know, Mack, running really is mystical, and in this talk of shoes and socks and stopwatches, we are searching for the mystical heart of the matter which, I found, will tell us what life is. And death. And love too. And truth; why not? Art."

A glimpse of irony does appear when Ronda, in a rippling athletic wind, Ronda falls for when her boyfriend returns to his wife, outlives his aspiration in the form of an absurd middle of facts:

"Now I see that by writing inspired lyrics, I can bring God too, and live a godly life, while doing it, a simple godly life, not a simple life, simple

writing, running, a pure diet I'm going to be a vegetarian now...

However, it becomes clear that the book is directed not at the aspirations themselves, but at the fact that Ronda—who turns out to be a hypocrite and villainous degrader of women—will never realize them. The tediousness itself remains undefined.

The sad thing is that somewhere inside this TV dinner of a novel there is a decent psychological thriller at the destruction of Ronda's despair at the degradation of her boyfriend manifests itself in an increasing obsession with the thought that the local rapist is going to choose her as the next victim. She begins to suspect that the rapist may be someone she knows. Could it be the husband, who goes at sex in a singularly rapist-like manner? Or is the rapist in fact a rapist (the possibility is accounted for)? In which case could it be the ex-boyfriend's strange wife?

Fear and misery cause Ronda to act perversely, and her friends begin to think she is cracking up. By a series of delusional twists and turns, Susan Trotter has the reader truly flummoxed as to whether Ronda has become completely paranoid (as her friends think) or if she is a sane woman with good reason to go a rapist behind every bush. In the end, ambiguity is exploited cleverly—she is somewhat glibly—to make the point that women, by their latent sexual brutality, have provided women with the image of a "rapist", always there behind the window for our women, always there. So while Ronda's fears may be without foundation in this particular instance, they are a justifiable response to a more general truth about the society she inhabits.

If you are not the sort to find an author's cloying style and inability to recognize irony as a serious flaw, you will enjoy *When Your Lover Leaves* for the efficiently constructed story it tells.

The plotters' course

By S. L. Andreski

DONALD L. HOROWITZ:
Coup Theories and Officers' Motives
Sri Lanka in Comparative Perspective
239pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £8.90.
0 691 07622 7

The views which the author presents and criticizes in the first part of this book scarcely deserve to be called "theories". As I have not read the books and articles to which he refers, I cannot judge whether Donald L. Horowitz distorts what he says, or whether the writers in question are really so naive as to imagine that from a study of a single instance you can infer a general rule about the motives of the leaders of all successful and unsuccessful military coups. No one who knows some history, and who realizes how different were the circumstances of various military interventions in politics, would imagine that the motives could have been the same in all instances. What could be the ground for imputing the same motives to the German generals in the July plot against Hitler, to Oliver Cromwell, Julius Caesar and Napoleon? Horowitz could reply that he is only concerned with "the developing countries" but this would not help because this category is far too broad to be of any use. Furthermore, even if we restrict ourselves to politics in the same part of the world and on a similar ego-system level, their circumstances are very different. The rule of General Barre in Somalia is so unlike that of Idi Amin in Uganda that it is inconceivable that their intentions in seizing power could have been the same. At the end of his book Horowitz quotes with approval another recent author who says: "Military regimes do not constitute a homogeneous population; considerable variation is found among them." But this has been common knowledge at least since *The Ruling Class*, Gaetano Mosca's great treatise (originally published in 1895 and 1923), appeared in America in 1939.

What the author says about Ceylon seems plausible but does not take us very far. He had the unique opportunity of interviewing nearly all the participants in an attempted coup there because, although the attempt failed, they were imprisoned only for a short period; indeed, when

interviewed they were living under a constitutional government and the rule of law, and all had good jobs in the private sector (a rare outcome of such an affair). It is a pity that Horowitz does not tell us more about their opinions, their life stories, their interpretation of the situation and conditions in the army and the country as a whole, their plans or programmes, and so on. Instead, he concentrates exclusively on their own statements about their motives, which are inevitably of doubtful reliability. It is a safe rule in studying politics that we can only infer motives from actions. Strangely, the book offers no explanation of why this particular plot failed, while similar attempts in other new states have been successful.

The author's explanation of why the coup was attempted can be summarized in two quotations:

As members of the English-speaking elite, some of the officers were not happy with Bandaranaike's language policies. Disproportionately Christian, they reacted negatively to the "rightful place" in the state and to the new political role of Buddhist monks. The Tamils and Eursians among the officers resented the government's encouragement of Sinhalese nationalism. Unashamedly middle class, some of the officers felt a decided pinch in the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's policies as they impinged on middle-class interests. As old boys of the prestigious schools and colleges, some objected to the takeover of the state-aided denominational schools.

The situation as the officers saw it had three characteristics that, taken together, convinced them that things were falling apart and might become irretrievable. The first was the accumulation of crises. The unrest of 1961 came from several quarters: from labour, ethnic groups, and religious groups. Any of these might have been difficult problems by itself. Together, they began to look insurmountable. The second characteristic was the sharpness of the leap into disorder... under these cumulative circumstances, the officers believed that the country was falling apart, becoming prey to dictatorship, on the one hand, or anarchy, on the other.

Horowitz's thesis is plausible but his book is marred by constant repetition and is excessively long as a result.

First forty-nine

By A. M. Rendel

GEORGE MALCOLM THOMSON:
The Prime Ministers
From Robert Walpole to Margaret Thatcher
200pp. Secker and Warburg. £10.
0 436 52045 1

This book is for those who enjoy the sun and shade of the historical. It is a study and an enjoyment of the cut and thrust of politics behind the scenes. George Malcolm Thomson can be trusted to produce a readable book out of a string of profiles of the forty-nine men and one woman who have been British Prime Ministers since 1721, when Robert Walpole, rather than the monarch, became the real focus of government. But the publisher's claim that the book is a series of profiles of the forty-nine men and one woman who have been British Prime Ministers since 1721, when Robert Walpole, rather than the monarch, became the real focus of government. But the publisher's claim that the book is a series of profiles of the forty-nine men and one woman who have been British Prime Ministers since 1721, when Robert Walpole, rather than the monarch, became the real focus of government. But the publisher's claim that the book is a series of profiles of the forty-nine men and one woman who have been British Prime Ministers since 1721, when Robert Walpole, rather than the monarch, became the real focus of government.

Readers with more than a superficial knowledge of the historical background, they are not seeing their Prime Ministers standing, one by one, whole. They are not seeing their Prime Ministers standing, one by one, whole. They are not seeing their Prime Ministers standing, one by one, whole. They are not seeing their Prime Ministers standing, one by one, whole.

Parliament and Information: The Westminster Series (132pp. The Library Association. £7.50; paperback, £3.00). The book is written by Dermot English, the Deputy Librarian of the House of Commons. The book is divided into two parts: the first dealing with "Parliament and Information" and the second with "Information for Parliament".

Memories of the ministry

By Janet Morgan

MICHAEL STEWART:
Life and Labour
288pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.50.
0 283 98686 7

There comes a moment—it has just come for me—when one pines for the latest political autobiography into a corner, along with all the other volumes of politicians' diaries and memoirs, and asks whether there will ever be an end to these yards of reminiscence and justification. Why do politicians insist on writing books? Are former Ministers especially prone to publish? Is it some piece of folk-wisdom, whispered down the years from one Cabinet to the next, that expressing oneself in print is the only sure antidote to the Privy Counsellor's Oath?

Let us take the possible explanations one by one. If only because it is recent, to Michael Stewart's book as an example of the phenomenon. First, money. Cabinet Ministers are well paid but their is a precarious profession, with no particular prospects. One day a fellow is on £20,000 or so a year, with perhaps an official residence in Downing Street or over Admiralty Arch, and sometimes a country place as well; the next, an election or a shuffle intervenes and he is knocked back to an MP's salary and rooms in Artillery Mansions. Signing a publisher's contract is an obvious way to even out the bump. This, however, was surely not the motive in Michael Stewart's case. His book is hardly likely to make him—or Sidgwick and Jackson—fortune and for that matter the tone of voice in which he speaks is not that of a man who cares deeply about money. Indeed, he ends his book serenely quoting Tennyson: "To have useful and interesting work to do, and enough money and leisure to be able to do it properly, is as much happiness as is good for the sons of Adam."

Another explanation is revenge. Here is a chance to answer small slights and relieve long-endured frustrations. Not, though, for Michael Stewart. He refers without rancour (taking the usual example) to Richard Crossman's account of Cabinet discussions on comprehensive education: "... the style of my speech must be a matter of opinion, though I doubt whether many people have noticed a resemblance between Rospierre and myself..." He is patient with those who make life difficult.

All actions of men are determined partly by reason and partly by emotion; but when they are grouped in nations, and armed, the emotional element increases. I was to realize this more fully later, contrasting my work at the Foreign Office with my subsequent work at the Department of Economic Affairs. In domestic affairs and economic disputes

there is usually some limit to the extent to which people will cut off their noses to spite their faces: in international affairs there is sometimes none at all.

What about the third motive for political autobiography: self-justification? Freed from the shackles of collective responsibility, from the need to follow a party line or appease constituents and departmental clients, a minister may spell out, uninterrupted by hecklers or investigative journalists, why he acted, or was obliged to act, as he did, or appeared to do. If this is Michael Stewart's purpose, he fulfils it with dazzling candour. He describes, for instance, the reasoning which led him, when Foreign Secretary, to give the British Government's support to the federalist side in the Nigerian civil war. He reminds us of the arguments which persuaded him, and his colleagues, to refrain from condemning continued American participation in the Vietnam war, and from offering British military support. He explains some of the complexities of sanctions policy against Rhodesia, including the question of evasion by subsidiaries of Shell and BP. Such recollections are delivered coolly and unremarkably, as if the author were saying, "That is how it seemed to me at the time, though you may have other views. I endeavoured, at any rate, to do my best."

Are these descriptions a little too bland, too unassuming? Mr Stewart's critics will suggest, as they did then, that he is being devious, making complicated issues seem too straightforward, using political and administrative constraints to excuse lack of imagination and resolve. His admirers will maintain that his modesty is genuine, not a trick to keep information hidden. After all, Mr Stewart always was decent and unpretentious, and realistic. Take his conclusion that he should not stand in the leadership election after Hugh Gaitskell's death: "It was soon clear," he tells us,

that although I should get a respectable vote, there was no chance of success, and that my candidature would only prolong and complicate the election. I decided not to stand and, since I was several years older than the other candidates, I realized that this was a final decision. I had seen a number of MPs fretted and worried by the recurring question, "Shall I ever be Prime Minister?" at any rate I would be free from that fever.

How remarkable. In that bizarre profession no expectation is improbable, and age has nothing to do with it. It looks as if Mr Stewart was indeed a man of reasonable sense and good sense.

If self-justification is not the chief motive for these memoirs, what is? Not gossip. In fact political autobiography in general contains much less gossip than publishers' catalogues and Prime Ministers' memoirs lead us to expect. The intimate glimpse of the domestic frontier, the revealing anecdote usually sound as if they had been scrambled after and ostentatiously pinned up for inspection. Mr Stewart's book has

very few of these exhibits. There is, however, an ingenious piece of non-gossip. "What do you think of Mr Bevan?" a junior minister's wife asks Mrs Attlee. "I think he's a marvellous man", she replies, "he looks one look at my cooker, saw what was wrong, and put it right."

There remain two related explanations for the enthusiasm with which former ministers rush into print. One has to do with their need for an audience. Suddenly there are no more constituents to canvass, conferences to address, parliamentary questions to answer. The red boxes cease to arrive; there are no longer committee papers to initial. The House of Lords is, after a while, an inadequate substitute. Writing a book brings excitement and activity: a contract, announcements, "research", galleys, page-proofs, even, with luck, a row with the Secretary to the Cabinet. Further, the fact that, during his time in office, a minister is *obliged* to be cagey suggests to him that he must be up to something in which the world will be passionately interested, once he has the chance to tell it and it has the chance to hear. The trappings and conventions of office encourage him to believe that he is in some way removed from ordinary life; when he steps back into the street he feels a need and a duty to report on what he has seen and undergone—especially if a publisher assures him that he should.

Reinforcing this is the other impulse: to make sense of what he has been engaged upon. It is very easy to be a minister, to be asked to pronounce on an endless succession of problems, from the most trivial to the cosmic, to be preoccupied for eighteen hours a day, rushing hither and thither, thinking about, skating daintily over this too. And then it is all over. As Mr Stewart reminds us, Mr Tassard pronounced upon his waxworks' future ("I said to my staff... after Harold Macmillan's night of the long knives, 'but Mr Selwyn Lloyd's head in a cupboard; we shall need it again'"). Waxen limbs are remoulded (Mr Stewart had been part of Sir Roy Welensky). The ex-minister is left with a clutter of recollections and some feelings, however momentary, of amazement at his own tenacity. He wants, eventually, to explain it all. If he is arrogant, he hopes to demonstrate how fitting it was that he should have been, for a time, in charge. If, like Mr Stewart, he is a man of some humility, he attempts to discover how such an extraordinary affair should have come about. But there is no guarantee, in either case, that high political office equips a man to write elegant and spirited prose.

Maybe we should ask a different question: why are publishers so keen to encourage ex-ministers? Is it public-spiritedness that makes them egg politicians on, or a curious collector's mania, or insatiable voyeurism? We can now purchase cassettes with a recording of Sir Harold Wilson reading from his own book on Prime Ministers. Next it will be Command Papers, on videotape. Could there be a moratorium?

The book underestimates party. Democracy in America is still "the right to vote for the man of another man's choice". In Ambrose's *Postscript*, says that other man is not a journalist. The candidate loved by the press—the Eugene McCarthy, the Andersons—the die young. Even now the primaries have grown in importance, party machines—cultivated over long periods by the Nixon and the Reagan—are an enormous help in securing and turning out the primary vote. As for the overall three-theme theory, its weakness is that all three pop up in every campaign. They are part of the political furniture. Take conciliation. The small girl in Desha, Ohio, who held up the placard saying "Bring us together" so admired by Nixon in 1968 had found it, as he found the sentiment, lying around. And conciliation was not the most obvious keynote of the campaign in 1980, which was properly turned on the problems of recession and war. Still, as to feeling to read the campaign bias, or to "feed" into the dialogue at a Washington party, the book will do very well.

John W. L. 1981